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How to Write
for the
"Movies"

Louella O. Parsons

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**THE GIFT OF
WALTER LICHTENSTEIN**

A.B. 1900, PH.D. 1907

**CURATOR OF THE HOHENZOLLERN
COLLECTION, 1905-1919**

**HONORARY CURATOR
OF GERMAN HISTORY**

**HOW TO WRITE
FOR THE
“ MOVIES ”**

HOW TO WRITE

FOR THE

“MOVIES”

BY

LOUELLA O. PARSONS



CHICAGO

A. C. McCLURG & CO.

1916

Thr 181.126



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A. C. McClurg & Co.

1915

Published September, 1915

PREFACE

DEAR FELLOW PLAYWRIGHTS:

My four years in the editorial chair of the Essanay Company brought me in the neighborhood of twenty thousand letters from ambitious photoplaywrights, begging me to help them write a scenario. During my connection with the *Chicago Herald* my mail has also contained hundreds of requests for help. In answer to this insistent plea I have prepared this textbook, which I trust will help the photoplaywright in his upward climb to success. It comes to you with my good wishes and with the hope that it may help you to become one of the world's most famous photoplaywrights.

Sincerely,

LOUELLA O. PARSONS.

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**HOW TO WRITE
FOR THE
“MOVIES”**

HOW TO WRITE FOR THE “MOVIES”

CHAPTER I

THE BIRTH OF THE MOTION PICTURE STORY

A FEW years ago we watched dim, uncertain figures staggering drunkenly about on a screen, and were thrilled that such seemingly inanimate film folk could smile at us, weep for us, move about and do everything that live people do, with the exception of actually speaking for us.

The stories that were unfolded for our vision were extremely crude; for the most part lurid melodramas, spineless dramas, and near-humorous comedies. The talented writer did not then consider motion picture literature a field for the exercise of his genius, so photoplays were mostly the work of amateur writers.

From a struggling new-born industry, this most spectacular achievement of the twentieth century has sprung up and developed into a mighty power,

How to Write for the "Movies"

with a name in the business world to conjure with. Large motion picture studios, with hundreds of men to operate them and thousands of theaters, where these films are displayed, have been erected, and the story of the miraculous growth of the "Movies" is as fascinating as a tale from the *Arabian Nights*.

With the development of the pictures and the enormous increase in their production the demand for the photoplay has increased until an individual with a creative mind, bent in this direction, now finds a ready market for activities, providing, of course, he has mastered the technique of the scenario.

I do not say that everyone can write a screen story, any more than I claim anyone can paint a great picture, or compose a world famous musical symphony; but I do say that anyone with a lively imagination and a creative mind, who cares to learn the technique of the photoplay, can write a saleable motion picture story.

A knowledge of technique is absolutely necessary if success in photoplay writing is desired, and it must be studied before scenario writing is attempted.

With this in view, I have prepared a series of photoplay lessons for the beginner, which I have endeavored to make as simple as possible.

Birth of the Picture Story

During the time I was scenario editor of the Essanay Company I tried to smooth the path of hundreds of writers, who came to me with their precious "Brain Children," unable to understand why their masterpieces, the product of their genius, failed to impress the editor and take a leading place in the photoplay world.

I have studied the subject of the photoplay from every angle, and it is from my actual experience with the scenario writer that I have evolved this series of lessons for the help of those who have photoplay ambitions.

When we consider that many of the greatest minds in the literary world today have given and are now giving their work to be ground in the studio mill into big feature productions it will be realized how essential it is to master the detail and to learn scenario construction.

From the small fifty-foot picture of a few years since to the mighty production totalling some five thousand feet of reel is an immense step, and from the humble ten-dollar-a-week photoplay actor to the accomplished film favorite at one thousand dollars a week is another tremendous change. A writer therefore who comes into the game at this time must possess something worth while to offer the scenario editor, if he hopes to become a successful photoplaywright.

How to Write for the "Movies"

Have you a bright original idea that you know would make a good picture story?

Nearly everyone who goes to the picture shows night after night has some plot stored in his mind that he feels would make a good photoplay, if he only knew how properly to construct the story! Ah, there's the rub! If he only knew *how* to put his story into a motion picture scenario! You may have a dozen clever, unique plots, but if you are ignorant of scenario construction your ideas are practically valueless.

In spite of the fact that many of the film companies have their own staff of writers, there is still a place for the free lance scenario writer. Thousands of dollars are spent every year in this country and abroad in the purchase of stories for picture production, and the companies are always on the lookout for new material.

Do not be discouraged if you have received rejection slips, but if you are convinced that you have creative power, start all over again, and with renewed vigor set out to master the construction of the photoplay. The fact that so many others have succeeded should encourage you, and if you persevere there is no good reason why you cannot learn to write scenarios.

Even if only the bare idea is required by a film company or in a scenario contest, you must know

Birth of the Picture Story

something about the construction of a photoplay to develop that idea to the extent of making it intelligible.

The technique of the scenario is necessary not only logically to develop a motion picture story idea but also to determine the question of proper screen material. How else can you learn the market or the limitation of the camera unless you make a careful study of the motion picture scenario?

I want to emphasize again that not only do you need to study to write an acceptable script, but you must also dig down to the very bottom of photoplay construction to even market a bare idea. To do this means a close application to the following chapters.

CHAPTER II

THE GLOSSARY OF THE PHOTOPLAY

THE child cannot run until he can walk. One cannot properly understand the complete scenario until one has learned the proper names of the scenario parts.

A complete list is here given of the technical terms used in the makeup of the motion picture story. The experienced workman must have the right tools to do satisfactory work. The writer must have the best tools obtainable to complete his work, for the strength of the building depends upon its foundation. Each part of the scenario is *your* foundation, so I suggest that you memorize each scenario term and its definition.

Take this glossary with you to a moving picture show and follow a play according to the definitions given. Say to yourself: "This is a fade out," "This is a subtitle," or, "This is a set," and so on, until you have recognized every term in the scenario vocabulary.

It will give you a feeling of great satisfaction to know that you are familiar enough with this all-important subject to be able to place each correctly in your mind. I have made this glossary

The Glossary

as simple as possible, so that even a child can understand it.

The first and most essential point in learning any art is concentration. You must concentrate upon this, and the succeeding chapters, if you want to comprehend the scenario in its entirety, and I want again to repeat the importance of learning every phase of scenario construction as here given.

The significance of this may not be apparent just at the beginning, but after you have read these lessons and applied them to the study of the motion picture as you see it at the theaters you will realize how utterly impossible it is for you to have an idea good enough for picture production without first learning of what material the picture on the screen is composed. The power to create is not given to everyone. But the ability to learn can be acquired by even the most stupid. So if you have even the slightest creative power you may learn to write an acceptable photoplay. On the contrary, if you have only the ideas without the technique you have no chance of becoming a photoplaywright.

GLOSSARY

Action.—The performance or gestures of the players used in the development of the plot.

How to Write for the "Movies"

Adaptation. — Using as the basis of your plot the idea advanced in a copyrighted story, poem, song, etc.

Business. — The definite action of the actor, such as winding a clock.

Camera Man. — An expert photographer who operates the camera.

Cast. — List of players who take part in the play.

Climax. — The big moment in the play. The point where all the threads of the story meet.

Closeup, or Bust. — Magnifying a scene or figure by bringing the camera closer.

Comedy. — A play in which humor is the keynote.

Crisis. — A series of big situations leading to the climax.

Cut Back. — Taking the audience back to a particular scene, after inserting other scenes, to identify and hold their interest. Frequently used to create suspense.

Cut In, or Cut To. — Usually a section of the dialogue used by the players in the play, flashed on the screen in the middle of a scene, which scene is then resumed.

Director. — The producer of a photoplay.

Discovered. — The character thrown upon the screen simultaneously with the first picture of the scene.

Dissolve. — The gradual bringing into a scene or

The Glossary

taking away of a character from a scene. The technical term used by the photographer is double exposure. Dreams and visions are frequently interpreted by means of a dissolve.

Drama. — A word applied to both pictures and the stage. A photoplay whose keynote is one of serious purpose.

Exterior. — An out-of-doors setting.

Fade In, or Fade Out. — The merging of one scene into another by a gradual disappearance of one and a gradual appearance of the other.

Farce Comedy. — An absurd improbability in which plot is secondary.

Flash. — An instantaneous appearance of a scene.

Footage. — The number of feet of film used in taking a scene.

Insert. — Any matter, such as letters, telegrams, mortgages, etc., that are inserted in the film. Subtitles do not come under this heading.

Interior. — An indoor setting.

Lead. — The chief rôle assumed by the actor or actress starring in the production.

Leader. — (See Subtitle.)

Makeup. — The materials used to change the appearance of the player.

Multiple Reel. — Used to designate more than one reel.

Off. — Withdrawal of characters from a scene.

How to Write for the "Movies"

Plot. — The motive of the story.

Reel. — One thousand feet of film. Used to designate the spool on which the film is wound.

Register. — The expression by bodily and facial action of the emotions of love, sympathy, hatred, etc.

Release. — The placing of the film on the market ready for exhibition.

Scenario. — The skeleton of any play. As applied to photoplays, that part of the photoplay that unfolds the plot scene by scene.

Sequence. — A story containing unity, with one line of plot-development.

Set. — Either the interior or exterior of a scene arranged for photographing. For example, a sitting-room with its complete furnishings and ready for action is called a set.

Split Reel. — Five hundred feet of film.

Subtitle. — The sentence thrown on the screen either preceding or in the middle of a scene. The subtitle is used to explain either lapse of time or any change of action that is not clear to the audience. The spoken subtitles are used to emphasize words used in an important scene.

Synopsis. — A brief outline of the photoplay told in about two or three hundred words, in story form.

CHAPTER III

THE SCENARIO

HAVING studied the glossary carefully, the student is now ready for a practical application of each of the technical terms he has memorized so thoroughly. It is especially important that he next make a complete study of the scenario from the technical point of view. .

The photoplay I am using in this chapter as an illustration is not to be considered from a story standpoint. It is just an ordinary, pretty tale without much plot construction — which will be studied later.

I am reminded of a little story I heard a well-known scenario editor tell not long ago. A gushing, overdressed girl of some sixteen summers rushed into his office with a script and insisted that he read it at once. The editor handed the pink-ribboned scenario back to its fair owner with the usual kind words of rejection. The girl exclaimed, in a despairing voice, "Oh, when do you think I shall be able to sell a scenario?" The editor said shortly, "Whenever you are able to write one."

I don't wish to do any tiresome moralizing, but

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I do wish to ask each of my readers to remember that little story.

I know you are all interested in seeing what the manuscript of a photoplay looks like. Buyers of photoplays have, through experience, settled upon a set or standard form which is followed by most successful writers. I am now giving a copy of the proper form for a photoplay manuscript. With the aid of the terms in the glossary you will not find it difficult to follow the form here given:

Cast of Characters

Marian Roberts — a beautiful, unselfish girl, whose life is spent in doing for others. *Lead*.

Don Winslow — Marian's fiance, who later marries Adelaide.

Adelaide Roberts — Marian's younger sister. A selfish, spoiled girl, who loves herself first.

Mrs. Roberts — Marian's invalid mother.

Miscellaneous

Dr. Scott (in Scene 8).

Marian's Friends — three or four young girls.

Adelaide's Friends (in Scene 9).

Guests at Wedding.

Child — about two years of age.

Little Girl — Same child about six years later.

Nurse.

Dr. Monro (in Scene 16).

Fashionably dressed women at bridge party.

Guests at dance.

Marian's employer (in Scene 7).

The Scenario

"THE WAY OF A WOMAN"

SYNOPSIS

(One Reel)

Marian Roberts is engaged to be married to Don Winslow. On the eve of their marriage Marian's mother has a serious paralytic stroke. Marian, realizing that Don must not be burdened with three women, postpones the wedding. She takes a position in an office and bravely attempts to support her mother and her sister Adelaide. Five years elapse. Adelaide has grown into a lovely but frivolous young woman. Marian has borne all the burdens. Don has frequently taken Adelaide to places of amusement when Marian felt she must stay at home with her mother. The girl's brightness and beauty fascinate Don. One night in a moment of madness he takes Adelaide in his arms. It is thus that Marian finds them. She hands her engagement ring to Adelaide and stumbles blindly from the room. Adelaide and Don are married and Don prospers. After three years of married life, Adelaide loves society better than anything in the world. Their baby is taken sick. Don forbids her to leave the child. She goes to a house party in spite of his commands. That night he calls Marian to little Margaret's bedside. Marian stays until the danger is passed. Adelaide is killed in a railroad accident and Don begs Marian to take little Margaret and teach her to grow into a lovely woman like herself. Marian takes the child with the understanding that Don will not interfere. Don agrees and Marian takes her abroad for six years. Time heals all wounds and Marian relents and lets

How to Write for the "Movies"

Don see his daughter. When he comes to her, Marian forgives him.

SCENE PLOT

<i>Ext. Int.</i>	<i>Settings.</i>	<i>Scenes.</i>
x	Sun parlor	1, 12, 24
x	Bedroom	2, 5
x	Parlor	3, 6, 8, 10, 11, 23
x	Office	4, 7
x	Entrance to house	9
x	Library	14, 16, 22
	Nursery	15, 18, 21
x	Exterior of church	13
x	Railroad station	17
x	Closeup	19
x	Corner ballroom	20

SCENARIO

Fade slowly in.

SCENE 1. — (Set sun parlor with hanging swing and background of plants.) *Closeup* ($\frac{1}{4}$ figure). Marian and Don are discovered sitting in hanging swing. Don looks down at Marian and says softly, "I love you, Marian." Marian accepts his kiss — the seal of their betrothal. *Fade slowly out.*

SUBTITLE 1. THREE MONTHS LATER. THE WEDDING DAY IS SET

SCENE 2. — (Set bedroom.) Furnishings are rather simple. Cretonne hangings. Spread on bed. Marian is happy and laughing girlishly as the girls admire her pretty things. Marian walks over to the closet and, with an air of great ceremony, brings out her wedding frock. "Here it is, girls. I am not going to be superstitious, I am going to let you all look at

The Scenario

it." The girls are admiring the pretty gown when the door is burst open and Adelaide, Marian's younger sister, rushes into the room. "Oh, Marian," she exclaims, "Come quick, Mother is dying." Marian, overcome with fear, rushes from the room, followed by her friends.

SCENE 3. — (Set combination parlor and library.) A couch near camera, on left center. Mrs. Roberts is lying on the couch, white and still. The doctor is bending over her. Marian and the girls come into the room. Marian walks over to her mother's side. The girls steal out of the room, and the doctor, putting his hand on Marian's shoulder, says: *Cut to:*

SUBTITLE 2. "YOUR MOTHER HAS HAD A
BAD STROKE. SHE WILL NOT BE
ABLE TO TEACH AGAIN"

Back to scene.

Marian is greatly worried and distressed, but so sweet is her nature that, forgetting her own heart-ache, she takes Adelaide in her arms and soothes and comforts her.

SCENE 4. — (Set an ordinary office.) Don is seated before a ledger busily writing. Suddenly pulls out his watch. His face lights up with a tender smile and he says, "By Jove! It's time to go and see Marian." Taking his coat and hat, he leaves the room.

SCENE 5. — (Set bedroom same as Scene 2.) Mrs. Roberts, looking very weak and sick, is lying in bed. Her eyes are closed and she looks very wan and pale. Marian is sitting by her side soothing her. Adelaide comes into the room and whispers to her sister, "Don

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is here." The suspicion of a smile lights up Marian's grave face and she leaves the room.

SCENE 6. — (Set parlor same as Scene 3.) Don is standing before the fire warming his hands. He walks toward Marian and leads her to the couch. She looks very tired and he is especially sweet and sympathetic. She says: *Cut to:*

SUBTITLE 3. "WE MUST POSTPONE THE
WEDDING. I CANNOT HAVE YOU
BURDENED WITH MY FAMILY"

In vain Don argues that his love is so great he is willing to support her mother and sister. Marian says, "No, dear; you must not be hampered with such a millstone around your neck." Don takes her in his arms. *Fade out slowly.*

SUBTITLE 4. FIVE YEARS HAVE PASSED
AND MARIAN IS STRUGGLING ALONE TO
CARE FOR HER MOTHER AND SISTER

SCENE 7. — (Set an office furnished with good furniture.) Marian gets up from the chair next to her employer's desk, where she has been busy taking dictation.

She walks over to her typewriter and, pushing her notebook in a drawer and covering her machine, gets her hat, preparatory to going home. Pinning on her hat and getting her coat, she bids her employer a pleasant good-night. Marian looks very much older. Her face is careworn and she shows the strain of her five years' hard work.

SCENE 8. — (Sets same as Scenes 3, 6.) Mrs. Roberts is sitting in an invalid chair. Marian rushes in

The Scenario

and says in a happy voice, "Well, how is the little mother tonight?" "Just the same, dear," the tired woman answers. "Where is Adelaide?" Marian inquires. "Oh, she is out with some of her friends." Marian frowns for a moment and then walks out of the room.

SCENE 9. — (Set exterior of Roberts' house.) Adelaide, a beautiful girl, dressed in the height of fashion, descends from a big touring car. It is filled with gay, laughing young people and she waves her hand gaily as she runs up the steps of the porch leading to her home. They all respond to her good-bye, and in a whirl are off in a cloud of dust. Adelaide opens the door and walks in.

SCENE 10. — (Set same as Scenes 3, 6, 8.) Marian has taken off her things and is giving her mother toast and tea from an invalid's tray. Adelaide, looking very young and attractive, bursts into the room. "Oh, the best time you can imagine," she says, as she kisses her sister and mother. The three gather around the fireplace and listen to Adelaide's chatter. *Fade out slowly.*

SUBTITLE 5. LATER

SCENE 11. — (Set same as Scenes 3, 6, 8, 10.) Mrs. Roberts is still in her invalid chair and Marian is reading aloud to her. Don, in evening dress, walks into the room. He kisses Marian in an indifferent fashion and shakes hands with Mrs. Roberts. The door opens and Adelaide, a vision of loveliness in her evening dress, walks into the room. Don's expression changes and he eyes Adelaide admiringly. Don says, (*Cut in:*)

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SUBTITLE 6. "WON'T YOU COME WITH US TONIGHT, MARIAN?"

Back to scene.

"I must finish this book in which mother and I are so interested." Marian would really like to go, but so strong is her sense of duty that she feels she must stay at home with her mother. There is no jealousy in her nature and she is genuinely glad that Don is giving her sister some pleasure. She fastens Adelaide's coat about her neck and, bidding them good-bye, waves her hand to them. After they are gone a suspicion of sadness shines in her face, just for a moment. She says, "Come, mother, I will take you upstairs and read to you." She wheels her mother from the room.

SCENE 12. — (Set sun parlor same as Scene 1.) The room is in semi-darkness. Don and Adelaide come in softly. Don turns up the light and they seat themselves in the hanging swing. Adelaide looks up into Don's eyes in a most coquettish manner. Don, swept off his feet by the madness of the moment, takes her in his arms and kisses her passionately two or three times. Marian, who has forgotten the book, comes to the door, and looks in just as Don is kissing her sister. A look of deep anguish comes into her face, just for the moment. Then recovering her composure, she walks over to the swing and hands Adelaide her engagement ring. The guilty pair start to their feet, but Marian stumbles blindly from the room without giving them a chance to explain.

SUBTITLE 7. FOUR WEEKS LATER

SCENE 13. — (Set exterior of small church.) Adelaide and Don have just been married. They come

The Scenario

out of the church followed by a host of their friends and relatives. They get into a carriage and are driven away. Marian, walking beside her mother, who is in an invalid chair, assists her into the next carriage. She stands for an instant beside the carriage after mother is safely inside, and her tragic expression is evident.

SUBTITLE 8. THREE YEARS LATER. DON HAS PROSPERED

SCENE 14. — (Set beautifully furnished room. Every evidence of wealth.) A bridge game is in progress. The women are playing fast and furiously. They are all gowned in their daintiest frocks and make a very pretty picture. Adelaide, reveling in this sort of thing, is flitting about from table to table — an ideal hostess. She looks as young and pretty as ever.

SCENE 15. — (Set a pretty nursery.) Child's bed. Suitable pictures on the wall. A number of toys are scattered about. Little Margaret, while her mother is in a whirl of gayety, is sick in bed. Don comes into the room and stands looking at the child with a softened expression. He puts his hand to her poor little hot head and shakes his head sadly. The nurse walks to the bedside and gives the child some medicine. "Where is her mother?" he demands. "Why, sir, she is having a party." "Party be d——" escapes from his lips. He turns on his heels and walks from the room.

SCENE 16. — (Set same as Scene 14.) The last guest is just saying good-bye to Adelaide as Don stalks into the room. He speaks rather sharply to Adelaide and tells her that she ought to look after

How to Write for the "Movies"

little Margaret better. Adelaide shrugs her shoulders, and tells Don that he spoils the child. "I must run along," she says. "I am going to the De Land house party tonight." Don tells her she must not go when the baby is sick. She laughs and starts to leave the room. Don strikes his hand on the table to emphasize his displeasure (*Cut to:*)

SUBTITLE 9. "I FORBID YOU TO GO AWAY WHEN YOUR CHILD IS SO ILL"

Back to scene.

Adelaide pays no attention, but goes out of the room with her head in the air.

SCENE 17. — (Set railroad station.) Adelaide in traveling suit and followed by maid carrying her bags, boards the train.

SCENE 18. — (Set same as Scene 15.) Little Margaret is really very sick. The doctor is bending anxiously over her bed. The nurse makes two or three futile attempts to give her medicine. Don is standing over her little crib with anxiety written on every line of his face. He walks to the table, and taking up the telephone calls a number. "Please, Central, give me Wenton 3456." "This you, Marian? The baby is sick. Can you come over right away?"

SCENE 19. — (*Closeup*, Marian at the 'phone.) "Why, Don, I am so sorry that Margaret is sick; I will be right over."

SCENE 20. — (Set ballroom.) *Flash*. Adelaide dancing and having a glorious time. Just a small dance, only about four couples on the floor. In this quick scene she is easily distinguished.

SCENE 21. — (Set same as Scenes 15, 18.) Marian

The Scenario

has the child in her arms. She gives little Margaret her medicine and they all look relieved. Don breathes a sigh of thanksgiving and the doctor shakes Marian by the hand. The child finally falls asleep and the nurse and doctor leave the room. Marian puts the child back in her little bed and Don sinks on his knees and buries his head in Marian's lap. Marian looks frightened for the moment, and then quietly gets up and leaves the room.

SCENE 22. — (Set same as Scenes 14, 16.) Marian with her hat on comes into the library. She is about to go quietly, when Don looks in and sees her. They have a few moments' conversation and Marian is about to go home when the maid comes in and hands Don a telegram. He reads it, then, without a word, hands it over to Marian. *Cut to:*

"YOUR WIFE KILLED IN TRAIN WRECK.

"C. C. FORESTER."

Back to scene.

Don puts his head in his hands and Marian tries to comfort him. *Fade out slowly.*

SUBTITLE 10. TWO WEEKS LATER. MARIAN IS ASKED TO TAKE CHARGE OF MARGARET

SCENE 23. — (Set same as Scenes 3, 6, 8, 10, 11.) Marian sitting alone and crocheting. Don comes into the room with his baby in his arms. He tells Marian that he wants her to take Margaret and teach her to grow up into a lovely woman like herself. Marian hesitates a moment, then says: "On the condition that you give me the child outright." Don does not want to accept these conditions, but is forced to leave

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his baby. Marian takes the baby in her arms and Don leaves them alone. *Fade out slowly. Marian with baby in her arms.*

SUBTITLE 11. MARIAN AND HER NIECE RETURN AFTER AN ABSENCE OF SIX YEARS

Fade in slowly.

SCENE 24. — (Set same as Scenes 1, 12.) Marian and Margaret are seated in the same old swing. Marian is reading a fairy tale to her, and the child is listening with absorbed interest. The door opens and Don comes in. Margaret has grown from a baby into a girl of eight years of age. She is rather shy with her father, but finally consents to let him kiss her. Don holds her in his arms and Marian stands by with a beautiful smile on her sweet face. Don, holding the child by one hand, walks toward Marian. Marian meets his glance and looks down. Don walks toward her. Margaret says, "Kiss him, Auntie." Marian, seeing the love in both their faces, swallows her pride and allows herself to be swept into Don's waiting arms. *Fade out slowly.*

END

CHAPTER IV

THE TOOLS OF THE TRADE

THE motion picture of today is a work of art, for the quality of the photoplay has improved almost beyond our comprehension. No longer can a mere hurriedly penciled narrative meet with attention. The day when the script was sent in on any kind of stationery — from a piece of torn wall paper to an old paper bag — has passed. To be even noticed by the readers, your manuscript must have a presentable appearance at the very outset.

In view of this fact it is most essential that the scenario writer should be equipped with all the necessary tools.

First of all, the selection of the paper, the envelopes, and even the typing is a matter worthy of consideration. A neat script has far more appeal to the eye of the editor than a soiled, careless, and badly typed scenario.

Use a heavy quality of white foolscap, eight by thirteen inches. Do not roll your manuscript; place it in the envelope with a self-addressed and stamped envelope. This return envelope insures the return of your script.

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The envelope in which your scenario is sent should be about ten and one-half by four inches. The one selected for return should, of course, be slightly smaller, about nine and one-half by four inches.

Many writers of my acquaintance have found it advisable to use a heavy grade of manila envelope. This stands the wear and tear of the mail, also the weight of the inclosed script.

Do not use a worn, frayed typewriter ribbon. Few studios will more than glance at a scenario that is not clearly and distinctly typed. Carbon copies of scripts are not considered. Plays written in longhand are *never read*. No editor has the time to bother with a scenario that is not carefully and neatly arranged.

It is not necessary to have monogrammed stationery embossed with the words "John Smith, Photoplaywright," at the top. The editor will find out soon enough whether or not you *are* a photoplaywright. A covering made of heavy brown paper has been found serviceable in protecting the scenario on its frequent trips to the different film companies. As one promising young writer said, "It saves a lot of extra copying."

I knew a young man who used a canary-colored covering for his scenarios. When this was copied by another ambitious photoplaywright he changed

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to a vivid scarlet. This youth, who, by the way, submitted his first acceptable script to me, is the only scenario writer whom I know who has used these spectacular methods to any advantage. He has since admitted that he believes the quieter way of producing results is preferable.

If you have no machine I would suggest that you engage a typist. You can have your manuscript copied for ten or fifteen cents a page.

But, if your means will permit, I would most earnestly recommend that you rent a typewriter. Then, later, if you have any success marketing your scenarios, you can easily buy your own machine. Most of the typewriter companies will permit you to apply the rent you have paid for the hired machine on a new one. You can very quickly learn to manipulate the keys. Nearly all newspaper writers and authors of note are self-taught typists. You will find that it is a great satisfaction to be able to do your own work. Get a record ribbon, black or blue, whichever you prefer. Do not use red or green. It is bad form to do so, and is the mark of an amateur.

The professional scenario writer is methodical and has a regular filing system. The best way to keep a correct record of your scenarios is to have the names of the different companies to whom you are submitting your photoplays typed on a

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card and put in a box or envelope, a card to each company. Arrange in alphabetical order. The title of your play, the date of submission, the date of either rejection or acceptance should be neatly typed on the cards. For example:

X. Y. Z. CO.

TITLE	DATE SUBMITTED
"The Awakening"	July 6th, '14.
TYPE OF STORY	DATE RET. OR AC.
Drama.	July 30th, '14.

Supply yourself with stationery, seconds for your carbon copy, carbon paper, a typewriter eraser, clips, and stamps.

Every bit of mail sent out should carry the proper amount of postage. If you are not supplied with scales have the envelope weighed at the post-office. It is important that your script should carry sufficient postage, for you are submitting your scenario not on the invitation of the scenario editor but at your own volition.

CHAPTER V

STUDYING THE MARKET

BEFORE delving into plot construction or analyzing each separate technical term, we will consider briefly the scenario market and how best to reach that autocrat, the scenario editor.

First we must consider carefully the exact needs of each company. Don't make the mistake of submitting a farce comedy, laid in the South only, to a company desiring western dramas. On the other hand, don't send a thrilling three-reel melodrama to a company that produces slap-stick comedy. Keep yourself informed as to your market and you will not make such mistakes.

If the work of an especial company appeals to you, if you admire the style of plays it produces, and if you feel this company is superior to any other film company, study the sort of photoplays it turns out and then consider the plots you have in mind and whether they are of the type this company is using. Do not submit them otherwise.

It is best, however, for a free lance writer not to play favorites. He should cater to every company and learn to recognize the earmarks of each film concern's brand.

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After my protracted experience as scenario editor, I feel I am qualified to write feelingly on the subject of the relationship of author and editor. Let me say right here that it is a mistaken idea that the editor is unwilling to extend to you any courtesy within his power. He is your friend and regrets every day of his life that he has not more time to spend developing the beginner and holding out a helping hand to those whom he feels deserves his help.

You *must* cultivate patience, and must not call at the studio or write a letter concerning your script. Your photoplay speaks for itself, and so after you have placed it in the postbox, forget it. It will either return to you or else, better still, in its place there will come a nice, comfortable check. I know for a fact that many scenarios have lost their chance of acceptance because the writer was too impatient. The editor has so much to do that he will send a story back rather than be annoyed by persistent enquiries concerning it.

Personal notes sent to the editor are like water on a duck's back. They make no impression. Submit your scenario with your name and address and don't bother to tell the sad story of your life. Perhaps the editor is in need of money, too. He may be supporting an invalid mother or have seven children to clothe and feed. No one cares

Studying the Market

to hear other people's troubles, and so don't pester the editor with yours. He doesn't give a picayune whether you are rich or poor; all he wants is the *goods* — when you have them you can sell your story. If your uncle is a bishop or your cousin a senator or you are a niece to a railroad president it matters not one iota to a film company. They want good plays, and good plays are all that interests them.

One of the questions that I am asked every day is, "How much do film companies pay for a photoplay?" That, of course, depends upon the length of the scenario. Naturally a two-reel scenario is worth more than a single reel, and a three-reel scenario is worth more than a two-reel, and so on. The price depends both upon the length and merit. Some stories are worth more than others. I think I can safely say, speaking for all companies, that a well-developed scenario is worth from twenty-five dollars a reel upwards. Of course the synopsis alone or just a mere idea will sell for as small a price as ten dollars. That is one reason why it is best to learn to turn out properly constructed stories. A thing worth doing at all is worth doing right.

CHAPTER VI

THE TITLE

THE first technical term that greets the eye in the scenario is the title. It is of far more importance than most people realize, for often the sale of the script depends upon its merit.

An attractive title will get the scenario editor's attention at once and is the best possible introduction to that august individual. A unique combination of words, a name that carries an appeal, presupposes genius in the editor's mind, and his interest is at once awakened.

Select your titles with that idea in view. Say to yourself, "The success of my photoplay depends upon its name. I will find an original title and one that cannot fail to get over." Make your comedies doubly funny by giving them an expressive name for a starter.

If you were clever enough to create a good plot you can easily give it a name that has alliteration. For instance, *The Biter Bitten* is the name of an old comedy in which alliteration is used most effectively. It also quickly gives the editor an idea of what he may expect in the script. It is a good plan to jot down in your notebook every

Continuity of Scenes

seated at dining table. Hero in evening clothes, etc., etc.

Having saved our hero with a launch, and our scenario with a subtitle, we are ready to discuss our subject. Slight jumps are sometimes unavoidable. For instance, it is frequently necessary to show lapse of time. In this event the invaluable subtitle has to be called upon, as in Scene 4 of our impromptu effort above.

It is not always lapse of time that has to be explained, but sometimes we encounter a jump that cannot be overcome without the use of a subtitle.

I have noticed that a mistake common to amateurs is their inability to divide a scene correctly. Some of the scenarios I have received have had enough action in one scene to fill a dozen scenes. Remember, a scene is where the action takes place in one location.

You cannot have your heroine walk from the parlor into the kitchen and show her in both rooms and still keep your action in one scene. Her playing the piano in the parlor is one scene, while her cooking on the gas range belongs to quite another scene. This is a simple explanation, but I want you to grasp my meaning.

In these days of expensive production it seems rather absurd to spend much time discussing how

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to cut down expenses. Just the same, I still believe that a scenario in which a sensible economy of sets is made has a better selling chance than the scenario that calls for a different interior in every room.

Directors do not like to produce a scenario that calls for too elaborate sets, unless, of course, it is a big feature, and then they expect an elaborate outlay of furniture and scenery. But in the simple every-day script, exercise judgment in your distribution of interior sets.

The summer is the delight of the producer's heart. He has the big outdoors to stage his play. He can utilize the trees and pretty surroundings as a background. No need to bother with tiresome interiors. I have seen some very good pictures that were made with all exterior sets, but, of course, the majority of scenarios require both interior and exterior scenes.

Right here seems a good time to open the subject of the scene plot. We have learned that the scene plot is that part of the scenario written to assist our friend the director. It is a memorandum of the various sets, both exterior and interior, that are used in the play. In the correctly developed script the producer can take the scene plot and check off each scene as he uses it in his picture. A scene plot never increases the selling power of

Continuity of Scenes

your scenario, but it adds to its value as a finished product.

The scene plot follows the synopsis and precedes your scenes. Do not bother with your property list. The director would rather make out his own. He knows the sort of furniture and the description of the articles called for in the play much better than you do.

CHAPTER IX

SCENIC ACTION

WE will assume that a fertile imagination has given you an original idea. You must now visualize your story. Close your eyes and work it out mentally. Don't rush for paper and pencil until you have placed each character and each scene in your mind's eye. The art of visualization is necessary to the success of your photoplay. It is a training of the imagination and a first aid to becoming a scenario writer.

When the idea has been developed in your mind it is then ready to be set forth on paper. Logically develop your scenes. Study continuity, and keep away from confusing complications.

Have one plot, as counterplots are a menace to the amateur. Work out that plot from the first to the last scene, approach your climax gradually, and make your big situation your climax. Your scenario, in order to be salable, must have a "punch." Unless you have the punch and the action, throw your efforts in the waste basket. A scenario without this inevitable combination is like a ship without a rudder. I can hear in a distance each one of my readers saying:

Scenic Action

“What is a punch?” It is the heart, the lungs and the vitals of your scenario. It is the life of your story, while action is the motive of screen pictures and therefore indispensable in developing your scenes.

Having both punch and action in your plot, you are ready to put it in scenario form. Early in the game you must establish the characters. Bring them into the story, each in his proper environment. Familiarize your audience with the hero, the villain, and all their kinfolk. You have memorized your plot so thoroughly that you know just when and how you are going to introduce your heroine.

These characters are real to you; they live and breathe and have all the other attributes of a human being. Make them just as real to the scenario editor and to the audience for whom they have been written.

Dialogue is not necessary, but frequently adds to your scenario by emphasizing an important scene. Cultivate realism. An improbable story has no chance of being available. The editor wants a story with real human interest, something that carries an appeal by the very reason of its heart interest.

Do not use a lot of superfluous words, but express yourself in enough words to make your

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script readable. A choppy scenario is quite as much at fault as long, tiresome, drawn-out scenes.

I have seen thousands of scenarios. I am not exaggerating when I say that I have read over fifty thousand scenarios while in the Essanay editorial chair. I find that most photoplaywrights have an individual method of evolving their scenes. Among the scripts I have criticised are many which have been written by the foremost and best recognized photoplaywrights in this country and abroad. Some of the writers will elaborate and give a minute description of the surroundings and characteristics of each one of their characters, while others will state briefly only the requisite portion of each scene. As I stated before, it is a good plan to strike a happy medium and have neither too much nor too little scenic action.

I know a writer who always approaches his climax with two plots. He works with two threads and weaves them together so skillfully that his climax is merely the coming together of his two ideas. This man is a trained workman and has had many years' experience as a professional writer. It is a difficult task to form your climax out of two distinct threads, and one that few writers can successfully accomplish.

One of the most popular, as well as frequent questions the amateur asks, is "How many scenes

Scenic Action

to a reel?" He seems to think it's as easy to give a definite number of scenes for each scenario as it is to learn the multiplication table. No one in the world can possibly tell how many scenes there are to a reel.

You cannot tell how many apples in a bushel. Of course not. The number of apples would depend upon their size. So it is with your scenes. The number of scenes to a reel depends entirely upon their length. Don't be foolish and say, "I have read somewhere that about thirty-five or forty scenes constitute a reel." Use your common sense and answer that question for yourself. Don't write a series of mere incidents and call it a scenario. Have your plot of sufficient importance to make it worthy of the editor's eye. Keep always in your mind that your production must have "punch."

CHAPTER X

THE CUT BACK

THE cut back has no more meaning to the layman than an extract from the Talmud, yet it is a very important part of the scenario.

In the beginning, the cut back was used to "get over" a difficult scene — to avoid showing the actual theft or murder or to close up a break in the action.

Later, the cut back was used to give added surprise and intensity to the plot.

The cut back refers to some particular scene that has gone before. The interest and suspense of the audience is intensified by using the cut back.

It was Griffith, the master producer, who first introduced the cut back in scenarios. Up to a few years ago the scenarios ran along without any apparent change. We followed our hero or heroine religiously through the story. We did not deviate from the beaten path, but went straight to the end of our scenario. Griffith changed this by flashing from one scene to another, by a series of short scenes. He made it possible for us to see the hero, and then the heroine, keeping each character before the audience. The cut back enables

The Cut Back

us to enjoy every emotion of our characters almost simultaneously.

Effective as this management of scenes has been, it is not used as much as it was formerly. The new school of motion picture acting seems to favor longer scenes and more deliberate action. The flashes or cut backs are still used when necessary, but not to the entire exclusion of longer scenes.

You cannot blame the finished actor for favoring the more extended scenic action. In the old days scenes were flashed on the screen so quickly that much of his fine dramatic acting was lost.

Today, a sensible director will give the actor time to act out his scenes. He will see that the actor has time to work his emotions up to the proper pitch. This is being brought home more and more as a better class of stories is being produced.

I watched *Graustark* in production, and I could not help marveling at the ease and freedom from hurry that seemed to prevail through all the big scenes in this feature production.

I was anxious to get the opinion of an actor as to the proper length for the big emotional scenes. I asked Francis X. Bushman, who played the lead in *Graustark*, why he preferred the longer scenes. I had previously heard a discussion on this subject, in which Mr. Bushman had

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expressed himself most strongly as being an advocate of extended scenic action.

He said: "A man who has a house to sell cannot rush to a prospective customer and demand the cash before he has even interested the buyer. So it is with the scenes in the photoplay. You cannot portray your emotions and do justice to them on the screen in less time than an actual happening can take place."

Brevity, a few years past, was considered the foundation of the scenario. Today the photoplaywright is given a license to put in detail and business. I know one man who has been a noted playwright and who within the last two months has come into the fold and joined the ranks of photoplaywrights. His scenarios are most unusual. They are lengthy and describe in detail the reason for every part of every scene.

A man is not permitted to enter a room and be seated without an explanation preceding his entrance.

This writer is, of course, a professional and his suggestions to the producer are all timely and worthy of consideration. My objection to this method of scenario writing is that while it is eminently suitable for the experienced writer, the amateur will not know how to put all this detail into his script. He will use a lot of meaningless

The Cut Back

action that will cause the editor irritation and the producer to rave.

Use the cut back when you wish to add zest to your story. If you feel that the audience needs another peep at your pretty heroine, bring her back into the story by using the cut back. If the hero was left in an interesting position and you wish to return to him again, a cut back will solve that solution to a nicety.

The cut back has its good qualities, but don't overwork it. Reserve it for special occasions, when you wish to use a lot of short scenes. There are times — even the long scene advocates will bear me out in this — when short scenes are the saving of the scenario.

The cut back is one of the most effective means of producing suspense that is known to the playwright. An example of suspense by means of the cut back is as follows:

SCENE 1. — Father lying very ill. Mother gives boy medicine bottle and tells him to hurry to drug store. Boy hurries out of the door.

SCENE 2. — Clerk standing behind counter. Boy enters store and gives clerk bottle to fill. Clerk goes back of the store to fill prescription.

SCENE 3. — Mother standing by father's side — anxiously feels his forehead.

SCENE 4. — Clerk gives the boy the medicine and the boy rushes from the store.

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SCENE 5. — Mother walks over to the window, hoping to see boy.

SCENE 6. — Clerk discovers he has given boy poison — rushes frantically from store.

SCENE 7. — Boy is riding along the road on horse-back.

SCENE 8. — Clerk running wildly along road.

SCENE 9. — Mother walking up and down room impatiently waiting for the medicine.

SCENE 10. — Boy riding rapidly toward house.

SCENE 11. — Clerk running, stops and leans against tree, panting breathlessly.

SCENE 12. — Boy enters house.

SCENE 13. — Clerk stops a passing automobile and gets in.

SCENE 14. — Mother takes medicine bottle from boy's hand.

SCENE 15. — Automobile comes speeding down the road.

SCENE 16. — Mother pours medicine out into a spoon.

SCENE 17. — Clerk rushes up the steps of the house.

SCENE 18. — Mother puts arm around father and is about to give him his medicine. Clerk rushes in and dashes medicine from spoon.

From the example given above, you can easily see that by flashing from the clerk to the boy and then back to the mother, we are able to prolong the suspense.

We do not know what the outcome will be —

The Cut Back

whether the father will be given the poison or whether the clerk will save him. The cut back in this case is used to good advantage and gives a punch to the story.

CHAPTER XI

THE SUBTITLE, OR LEADER

SHAKESPEARE, in his *Merry Wives of Windsor*, says: "I cannot tell what the dickens his name is."

Subtitle, leader, or subhead, take your choice — some writers prefer one name, some another — just so that we know that all mean the same thing. Please remember when I write of the leader, I mean the subtitle, and when I mention the subtitle I mean that little sentence that generally precedes the scenes and is sometimes called the leader.

We are going to have a heart-to-heart talk about the function of the subtitle. It is used to elucidate any part of the story that cannot otherwise be made clear to an audience. It also explains lapse of time. To use an illustration, a heroine wearing a shimmering summer gown in one scene and in the next a fur-trimmed winter garment needs some way of telling the audience her reasons for changing her clothes. It would be absurd to show a lapse of time without an explanatory subtitle. We might say, "Six Months Later," thus pointing out that plenty of time had elapsed to permit the fur-wearing season to be with us.

The Subtitle, or Leader

The correct position of the leader is just preceding a scene, or as a break in a scene where explanation is necessary. Not so very long ago — in fact, when I first started to write scenarios — I learned that the value of a scenario was determined largely by the use of few leaders. I remember a western drama was released which boasted of no subtitles. This was considered a model of perfect construction. The story was clear, interesting and apparently needed no subtitles.

The question of the number and the length of the leaders has been one that has and always will create more or less of a discussion among photoplaywrights.

Such well-known and successful writers as William Lord Wright and Epes W. Sargent have written in favor of few subtitles. Wright says:

“The fewer subtitles that are introduced into the motion picture play the better the atmosphere and realism of the play. The artistic endeavor should be to write the action of the photoplay so that the subtitle is unnecessary.”

Sargent says: “The leader halts the brain and for a moment halts the interest in the pictures, while the brain assimilates the information just conveyed.”

Sargent compares the leader to the curtain in

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the theater, saying, "It takes time after it is used to get the audience back."

I have quoted two men who are well-known photoplaywrights, and while I cannot say that I agree with them, I think it is only fair that you should have the two sides of the question presented to you. I believe, of course, that a certain amount of economy of subtitles is necessary, but I want to emphasize most emphatically the necessity of using enough leaders to make your story clear.

In these days of advanced scenario writing the elimination of subtitles is not the first consideration, rather the revising and polishing of these sentences until they are written in telling language. Your English, your power of expression, and your literary style have all a part in the subtitles of the newer photoplay.

You cannot be prodigal in your language and interpose any unnecessary flowery phrases; footage is too precious. Neither must you express yourself in the stilted words of a child just learning to talk.

As an apt illustration of the too long subtitle we might give:

"It is surely the inevitable will of God that has brought this affliction upon us. We must in this adversity bow our heads to His commands."

That is all very well if you have one thousand

The Subtitle, or Leader

feet of film at your disposal to give to your subtitle, but when you have a limited amount of footage why not be sensible and merely say:

“God’s will be done.”

You have expressed the same thought without making the director cut out a scene or two to make room for your long-winded leader.

On the other hand, if you are explaining a vital bit of action in your big scenes by means of a leader, do not shorten it until it sounds perfectly senseless.

For instance: “Believing the mining stock to be genuine, Frank accepts their offer as salesman.”

That meaning is correct, and we have not used any superfluous words. If we cut down that subtitle and say, “Frank accepts their offer as salesman,” we have not told that Frank is ignorant of the fraudulent nature of the mining stock, nor have we told what he intends to sell. So the first subtitle is the better one for us.

Frequently the leader is used to smooth over a difficult place in the scenario, such as a deathbed scene. No one likes to see poor, old, sick father die. So to put him out of his misery and let our waiting friends know that he has quietly passed away, insert a subtitle something like this: “The Week Following Father’s Death.” This will break the sad news to the audience.

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As a film saver, and as a medium of getting both emotion and action down to fewer scenes, and, lastly, as the best known way of reserving our footage for the scenes, the subtitle is about the most important aid in our entire glossary of scenario terms.

We have grown to watch eagerly the screen actors, to see if we can get their words in the big dramatic scenes. The spoken subtitle has solved that problem for us. By quoting from the lines of conversation in our script we are able to discover exactly what our hero is saying to the beautiful lady of his dreams. If there is some reason why she cannot accept his proposal of marriage other than the usual negative shake of her pretty head, we would appreciate being let in on the secret. If she is already engaged, a leader saying:

"I love you, but I must marry Worthington, to save father's fortune," is most apropos.

Many amateurs are in doubt about the propriety of using conversation in their scenarios. This seems a very good place to answer all those to whom this question is not clear. Conversation of course is left to your own volition. Personally I think spoken subtitles and words put into the mouths of the characters at the psychological time greatly enhances the value of your photoplay.

If you can put a sentence in here and there,

The Subtitle, or Leader

without overdoing it, I would suggest that you use dialogue.

Keep abreast of the times and learn the best way to write your leaders.

CHAPTER XII

THE MISSION OF THE SUBTITLE

IN the last chapter we merely discussed the function of the subtitle. There is much more to be said on this subject that will be of inestimable value to us in preparing our script. A subject that is as powerful an aid to the acceptance of our scenario as the subtitle must be given every attention.

The old argument of the motion picture enthusiast disliking to see a picture that is full of subtitles is not true. I formerly believed in that argument myself, but I have been converted, and I am now of the opinion that any intelligent, well-read audience would much rather have a picture explained, by the aid of words, than sit through a dozen or more scenes in total ignorance of what the picture is all about.

The two-reel picture has helped solve the difficulty of getting subtitle and action into one thousand feet of film. A plot that is in any way remarkable or worth while is not crowded into a single reel, but is skillfully and carefully told in a two-reel production, or in even a longer photoplay.

The Mission of the Subtitle

Of course the pioneer photoplaywright had to use his own initiative about the construction, the plot, and trend of his scenic action. You can profit by his experience and take many of the things that he had to learn for himself as a gift from him.

Just a few years ago a story that depended upon its subtitles to "get it across," was instantly tabooed. The scenario editor counted the leaders and if they averaged too many, although he may have liked the plot, turned the scenario over to the staff writer with the request that he read it and see if some of the subtitles could be eliminated without spoiling the story. One of the most potent criticisms was "Too Many Subtitles," but times have changed and it's up to us to keep pace with progress and learn the new way of doing things.

The conversation in the photodrama has proven so efficacious that all the adaptations of the big plays and the famous novels have used in the subtitles their best lines. I have in mind *Lord Chumley*, *The Spoilers*, *The Sporting Duchess*, *The White Sister*, and many other well-known features. The scenario writers who dramatized these productions realized the importance of the subtitles in making the pictures clear.

Instead of subtitles interfering with the humor of a comedy we are forced to believe that a leader

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has saved many a scenario from absolute stupidity. Some of the biggest laugh getters owe their success to the clever words in the leaders. I have especially in mind the George Ade fables. The subtitles that precede many of the scenes in these pictures are screamingly funny. Undoubtedly they have helped largely in giving the fables the popularity they have enjoyed. Every leader in these plays is expressed in Ade's inimitable fashion and usually makes even the most gloomy man in the audience laugh heartily.

When you are polishing the subtitles for your dramas, and trying your best to say something bright in your comedy leaders, keep in mind that the words you put together have just as much sounding significance as a musical composition. The lines in your subtitle may sound harsh and discordant, or they may read with a smoothness that is pleasing to the ear.

Cultivate learning word sound. Start your synopsis, polish and rewrite it until it reads with an easy fluency that fills you with pride; then take up your subtitles and make them gems of expression and thought.

To many beginning, the question of breaking into the middle of a scene with a subtitle has been a nightmare.

The question of how to divide a scene when a

The Mission of the Subtitle

subtitle is used is one reason for this difficulty. Whether to give the scene the same number, or go on and consider it the next scene is another source of trouble.

Express yourself this way:

SCENE 8. — Ruth comes slowly into the room wiping her eyes. Her father, seeing her evident emotion, says, "My child, what is disturbing you?" Ruth hesitates for the fraction of a second, then throwing herself into her father's arms, says (*Cut to subtitle*):

SUBTITLE. "OH, FATHER, ROY HAS BEEN
SERIOUSLY INJURED, AND THEY
ARE BRINGING HIM HERE"

Back to scene.

The old man staggered at this, etc., etc.

Instead of starting a new scene after the spoken subtitle has been inserted, we merely say "Back to scene," indicating that the action reverts to the same scene, and not to a new scene.

CHAPTER XIII

THE TELEGRAM AND LETTER

IN the class with the subtitle comes the letter, the telegram, and the newspaper heads. Also the legal instruments, viz., mortgages and wills. These are all closely related to the subtitle in that they serve much the same purpose, that of explanation.

When sitting in a picture show reading a telegram or the headlines of a newspaper it all seems as simple as a child's first sum in addition. They are simple after you know how to express them and to place them correctly in your scenario. But you must give them close attention until you know where they belong.

I am sure you will find your inserts more complicated than appears on the surface, and a careful study of this chapter will help you greatly when you are ready to work out your scenic action.

Let us discuss first of all the telegram. This is frequently used as a substitute for the leader. The ten words of the ordinary telegram will often save a lengthy leader, or, better still, permit us to eliminate three or four scenes of added action. We can put our words in a stilted fashion in a

The Telegram and Letter

telegram, that would not be permissible in a letter or a subtitle. Why? Because we are so accustomed to saving our pennies in real life that it is the most natural thing in the world to do the same on the screen.

A telegram does not alone act as a subtitle, but has a quite distinct mission of its own. It carries messages for us in our photodramas just exactly as it does in our every-day life.

As an example: Charlie is called out of the city to the bedside of his dying mother. A message is essential to let Charlie know of his mother's critical condition. In this case it can be used also in giving Charlie a motive for leaving town.

We can say:

SCENE 4. — Charlie is sitting in the easy chair smoking. His valet enters the room with a telegram on a silver salver. Charlie looks up, takes the telegram and opens it. He reads and looks very troubled.

Insert:

“MOTHER DYING. COME TO ALLENVILLE AT ONCE. — FATHER ”

Back to scene.

Charlie instructs his sympathetic valet to pack his bag at once. The valet hastens into the next room.

We have told the whole situation, the reason for Charlie leaving town, his mother's condition, and

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all in seven words. We have saved footage and used our telegram as the method of conveying the sad intelligence to Charlie.

If we are crowded for room Charlie can next be seen at his mother's bedside. There would be no jump in that, for no further explanation is needed, because when we left Charlie he was preparing to go to Allenville.

Use a telegram when you want to convey news hurriedly, or to save footage, but do not overdo this method of expression or it will lose its value.

Now the letter. How many scenarios bear the earmarks of an amateur just because of the long letters and absolutely non-essential action conveyed in them. Study the letter with care, for it is more frequently misused than any other part of the scenario.

Long letters from one schoolgirl to another, or from a lover to a sweetheart have no place in the well-constructed scenario. Leave out all idle gossip; your footage is too precious to waste on such trifles.

An additional word or two, so as not to have your missive seem too abrupt, will pass muster, but by no means give the story of your heroine's life and then wonder why your photoplay was found unavailable.

As an example: Alice wishes to go to the city

The Telegram and Letter

to attend the grand opera. Her mother decides to write and see if it is convenient for her to visit a friend. She writes a letter. Not in the stilted telegraphic way, but in the usual letter tone. Leave out all the superfluous words that do not contain the reason for the letter.

Flash:

Dear Jane: Alice would like to visit the city for grand opera. May she spend the week as your guest? I will be so grateful for your chaperonage.

Sincerely,

Mary James.

The beginning and ending may be omitted if you are crowded for room. Some producers fold a letter and show merely the line that they wish the audience to read. You can flash your letter in this way:

Flash:

. . . and so we would like to send Alice to the city to attend grand opera. I am asking you to let her stay with you"—

This suggests that you are only given an opportunity to peep at part of the interesting letter. It seems plausible that the letter between two friends is of greater length than just the line or two asking permission for Alice to come to the city.

Also remember, since the letter is frequently flashed twice — once when it is sent and again

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when it is received — it is necessary that it be made as short as possible.

If you can, it is advisable to arrange your scenes so that you can show the letter once only. If, however, the letter is very important, your message is more emphatic when the audience has a chance to read it twice. So if you cannot construct your scenic action without flashing your letter twice you have not committed a misdemeanor.

Don't under any circumstances use a real name or a correct address. I remember a series of articles that a well-known journalist wrote. He endeavored to make his stories more interesting by using a telephone number that really existed. He and the poor family whose phone number he used were bored to death by professional jokers. Save yourself and your friends annoyance by avoiding correct names and addresses.

CHAPTER XIV

THE NEWSPAPER INSERT

QUITE as important and interesting as the letter and telegram is the newspaper heading, mortgage, and will which are also used to save footage, and in lieu of a subtitle, to explain some portion of the photoplay which cannot be made sufficiently clear without using a newspaper head or clipping.

The newspaper insert is flashed on the screen to convey to the audience some bit of news. While this insert has a little niche all its own, still its purpose is similar to the telegram and letter. It is, as previously said, used as a substitute for the subtitle, and sometimes as the easiest and most efficacious manner in bringing a vital message before the audience.

If you aim to reproduce a bona fide newspaper article you must cultivate true newspaper style. Study the daily papers and see how the headings of the big events are written. Sometimes only the heading of an article is flashed on the screen, then again the body of the story, and oftentimes both the heading and the body.

The paper is made up just like a real newspa-

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per, but only the part with the article is necessary for the eyes of the public. I am, however, giving this only as a bit of interesting information. You need not bother about the makeup of the screen newspaper. All that concerns you is the article you wish to write in your scenario.

As an example: Robert Grant, a handsome young lieutenant, is called to the border of Mexico and he leaves with his regiment. He says good-bye to his fiancée and promises to return to her as soon as possible. She receives letters from him during the first month, then his correspondence ceases. She is in despair. Her father brings her the morning paper and she reads:

ROBERT GRANT REPORTED AMONG THOSE MISSING

A number of American soldiers met death early last month while engaged in a skirmish on the border of Mexico. Robert Grant, who gallantly rescued the flag, is among those who are missing.

Thus is given the reason for Robert's silence. Also it is inferred that he died bravely. This is an important feature of the script, so it is given more space than the ordinary newspaper item.

Many comedies have been based on newspaper advertisements. The columns devoted to roomers wanted, servant girls, and matrimonial advertisements have all been food for the humorist. These

The Newspaper Insert

advertisements are so small, however, that often the director will make up his newspaper insert with several other advertisements, the particular item that he wishes to call attention to being written in darker ink or with a line drawn around it to mark its significance.

If you wish to quote from a book, don't copy the whole page in your photoplay. Use only that part of the quotation that concerns your story. Don't put in a lot of superfluous words. I do not advise too frequent use of book quotations, but there are times when such an extract from a suitable source fits in nicely.

Under the head of inserted matter we must also place legal documents, such as wills, mortgages, and other legal instruments.

The mortgage is not as popular now as it was a few years back. To slow music we watched the old people being put out of their home, while the "villyun" clutches the papers in his hand and refuses to spare the poor old white-haired father and mother. All this has been done so often that the average scenario editor will refuse to read even the title of a scenario that contains the word mortgage.

But there are some plots where you can make proper use of the legal instrument in your scenario, and in order to meet the situation should it arise

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you must learn how to word the mortgage deed. Remember that brevity is essential, and insert only that portion of the mortgage required for your photoplay.

The life insurance policy is occasionally called into play. We may desire to let the audience know that Arthur's widow was not left penniless. To accomplish this we show a clause in an insurance policy stating that Mrs. Arthur Harris is the beneficiary of the five thousand dollars in insurance left by her late husband.

The will is often used, and is of far greater importance than any of the other legal documents. Before I cite an example, however, let me impress upon you not to copy an entire will. It is not material whether the old homestead was bequeathed to Bertha or Jane, persons in whom we are not interested. All that we care to know is that the hero is the heir to all Uncle John's money.

You can easily acquaint the audience with the fact that the hero has been left a legacy, by giving the essential portion of the will on the screen; as, for instance:

I, John Smith, being of sound mind, do hereby bequeath to my beloved nephew the sum of one hundred thousand dollars in cash, all my railroad stock, my bonds and other personal property except that otherwise disposed of.

The Newspaper Insert

Let me impress upon you the necessity of using discretion in preparing your inserted matter. The editor can tell by a casual glance over your script if your inserted matter is handled awkwardly. If you have not used good judgment in writing your letters, telegrams, newspaper items, and legal instruments, he will put you down as an amateur and your play will be returned. Study every insert. Cut out everything that is not essential and build up the part that you wish to use by a careful selection of pertinent phrases.

CHAPTER XV

PLAGIARIZING

YOU have now learned something about the technical terms of the scenario. The next step will be to learn something about plot construction. But before we get ready to select our material it is necessary that we have a clear understanding of what that ugly word *plagiarism* means.

The commandment "Thou shalt not steal" does not seem to have much effect on some of the scenario writers. It is just as wicked to steal another person's idea as it is to walk into a department store and help yourself to a thousand dollars' worth of lace. The size of the theft does not lessen the crime any more than the kind of robbery can change the name to something less disagreeable.

If you borrow a plot you have read somewhere without varying it in the least you are a thief in the fullest sense of the word. Of course, a similarity of ideas is a frequent occurrence. When you stop and think that there are three hundred and sixty-five days in the calendar year and over fifty companies producing scenarios, some of them

Plagiarizing

turning out six pictures a week, it is not remarkable that occasionally two companies will get similar ideas.

In explanation of this, a comedy director, who was also a scenario writer, was wont to say there are only thirteen plots in the world, and I have been told that a well-known authority claims that only seven plots have been born since the creation.

It is one of the most natural things in the world that an idea we have read in a newspaper or magazine suggest suitable material for a scenario. If we write a photoplay taken from an incident we have read about we are not stealing a plot, but if we take for our own use another man's story we are plagiarizing.

Plagiarizing is a nasty little word, and one the professional writer would hate to have applied to him. It means the death knell to the amateur, and is, therefore, to be avoided as carefully as one would the plague.

Many beginners are guilty of using another writer's ideas merely through ignorance. Some of you probably are shaking your head and saying everyone knows it is wrong to take what does not belong to him. Let me tell you of a case that was brought to my attention several years ago.

A western film company bought a scenario from a woman who lives in a little town in Wisconsin.

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They set a release date, put out their advertising matter and sent out their posters when a story, that was identical in plot, action, and climax, was advertised by a very well-known eastern company. The western editor's attention was called to this very peculiar circumstance. Inquiry brought to light that both scenarios were taken from a magazine story written by a well-known short story writer. The story had been published some five or six years previous, and had escaped the watchful eyes of both scenario departments.

The western editor wrote to the Wisconsin woman and asked her to explain the awkward situation both companies found themselves in. The little old lady, about sixty years of age, came hurrying to the western studio with her husband. She was a church member and very religious. She freely admitted taking the magazine story, but wept bitterly at the thought of wrongdoing. She did not consciously do wrong because she had never heard of the copyright law, or that it was wrong for one person coolly to appropriate another person's idea.

I am not surprised at ignorance of this sort, for I have received many letters asking me if I don't think a certain pretty magazine story would make a beautiful motion picture, several of the beginners added naively: "I intend to put it into a scenario

Plagiarizing

form." I hasten to warn each and every would-be transgressor who is contemplating such a step to beware of the copyright law.

I shall later devote more space to the subject of copyright, but I want to say right here to my readers, that the using of a plot that has originated in the fertile brain of another writer means trouble. The author or publisher will be on your trail with a formidable legal document and this means hauling you into court. Furthermore, you will be branded evermore as a plagiarist. Any author who has a plot worth using has it protected by the copyright law.

As I stated before, you cannot always help having ideas that are similar to another writer's, nor can you help getting suggestions from the tales you have read. As an example:

The triangle has been used as the basis of a story from time immemorial. Every writer who writes a story of two men and a woman, or two women and a man is not guilty of plagiarizing. If, however, you use exactly the same idea of a triangle that another writer has previously made the subject of his script you are a plagiarist.

Be honest, photoplaywrights. Honesty is always the best policy and pays best in the long run.

CHAPTER XVI

THE PEST

A FAULT that is as serious as plagiarizing is the unkind spirit of belief that everyone who has a peep at your scenario is going to steal it.

The worst pest in the world is the man or woman who is afraid to trust his script to the scenario editor, fearing that his ideas may be stolen. I have received hundreds of letters asking me if I did not think the scenario departments of the different film companies used ideas that were sent in from outside contributors.

On each and every occasion I have answered, "No," most emphatically. The scenario editor is only too glad to buy any ideas that are original and out of the beaten path. If you have a story that has merit he will send you a check for it immediately.

Of course, I am speaking now of the recognized film companies — those that have established reputations. I have no doubt that the newer companies are just as honest, only I do not happen to be acquainted with their methods.

Surely if men like Epes W. Sargent, William Lord Wright, and Roy McCardell are willing to

The Pest

send their photoplays to the different companies there is no reason why a beginner should have foolish fears.

Get the play-stealing idea out of your head. If you want to be a successful photoplaywright forget all such unworthy suspicions. Read this letter from a man who has made good and remember what he says. The letter is from William Lord Wright, the pioneer photoplaywright, and was written in answer to my inquiry whether he ever had any plots stolen.

I have written hundreds of photoplays, and I have never to my knowledge had one idea stolen. I have known any number of promising writers who have failed in their chosen field because they gave way to these suspicions. They grow morbid on the subject, so that to them the entire world is inhabited by persons whose one idea is to filch ideas and plots submitted.

It is not a particularly politic move to tell an editor he may keep your scenario on his desk if he is quite sure he will not be tempted to read it and swipe the idea. The editor if he be a person of temper and temperament will most likely tell you to get out of his office and take your scenario with you. Or, if he has a sense of humor and your conceit appeals to his sense of the ridiculous he will most likely tell you that you couldn't give

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him the scenario with one hundred dollars bonus for using the idea.

Approach the editor in a different mood, for no person likes to have the charge of being dishonest held over his head whether he deserves it or not. So let your friend the editor see that you know you can trust him with the scenario and that you do not care one bit how long he keeps it. That is the spirit that will pave the way to success. It's the spirit the editor admires and if he cannot use your story, he will at any rate remember you in kindness which may help some.

A few years back before the scenario departments were as systematically conducted as now, the scenario editor would occasionally get "stung." By that I mean he would sometimes buy a scenario that the author had stolen from some other writer. When this happened the editor would at once communicate with the other scenario editors and said author was immediately put on the blacklist of the entire scenario world, and no other company would ever read any scenarios submitted by him.

CHAPTER XVII

THE COPYRIGHT

IT IS surprising how few photoplaywrights appreciate or understand the significance of the copyright law. It protects short stories, books, and plays — in fact, everything that has been found acceptable in this line with the exception of the photoplay.

A scenario cannot be copyrighted unless it is in printed form. A scenario that has not been found acceptable, and is not in printed book form cannot be protected by our copyright law. I have been amused to see on various occasions that scenarios that came to me for criticism bore the words copyrighted written boldly across the front of the page.

It is a grave mistake to make such use of the word copyright. The scenario editor knows that your script cannot be copyrighted and, therefore, at the very start before he even reads it is aware that you are trifling with him by flirting with the truth. It pays to be square.

By using the word copyright without lawful permission you are very apt to get into serious difficulty. Uncle Sam is no respecter of persons,

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and if he discovers that you have used a word belonging to him, and which he has given you no authority to use, he is apt to be vexed and to seek a way adequately to punish you for your lack of respect.

If you have written a story that has reached the publication stage or an acceptable play, register your work in Washington and get it protected by copyright. But the *manuscript* of your book or play cannot be copyrighted.

Epes W. Sargent, whom I have frequently quoted as being one of the pioneer writers in the country, says:

Mr. Thorwald Solberg, the registrar of copyrights, is one of the most efficient servants in the government employ, in that he is constantly striving to give the fullest and most complete service his department can be made to afford. Twice he has urged upon the congressional committee that the photoplay be admitted to copyright; not that he feels the copyright protection should be needed, but because so many have sought it. Each time the request has been refused by successive congresses, if for no reason than that the unpublished manuscript is as fully protected by common law as is the published work by copyright law.

A thief is a thief anywhere or any place and while we scenario writers would like the comfortable assurance that the beloved child of our imagi-

The Copyright

nation is carefully sheltered by this special law, still we are thankful for the common law.

William Lord Wright, through the columns of the *Dramatic Mirror* agitated the introduction of a bill advocating the copyright of the photoplay. Frank B. Willis, former representative from Ohio, introduced a bill to copyright motion picture scripts, by calling them printed dramatic compositions. Mr. Willis has since been made governor of Ohio, and the bill has been buried in committee.

The Photoplay Authors' League of America indorsed the movement started by Mr. Wright, and requested their representatives from California to do all in their power to push the bill.

But in spite of this fact the bill has never become a law. The nearest we have ever reached to the protection of our scenarios is in the law which permits the film to be copyrighted after it has been photographed. It then comes under the head of photographs.

A pertinent bit of advice comes from Mr. Sargent, who says:

Copyright is not government insurance against theft. It merely provides perfunctory registration for published works, and a code of laws under which an author may bring suit *at his own expense*, if he desires. The publication of a photoplay is production

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on film. *Before that it cannot be copyrighted.* It is not lawful to make use of copyrighted material, or of a colorable imitation, without consent of the holder of the copyrights. It seldom, if ever, pays the free lance to purchase these permissions.

It is unwise to assume the expiration of copyright of an old book. Be certain that it has not been renewed.

Personally I do not think the photoplaywright has any need to lose sleep over the fact that he cannot copyright his wares. Every reputable company employs readers whose integrity is, beyond the shadow of a doubt, irreproachable, and therefore the scenario writer is running little or no risk in submitting his photoplay.

CHAPTER XVIII

OLD IDEAS

IN AN earlier chapter I stated that no one could write a scenario who did not possess creative ability, and I also said that the person who could not invent an original photoplay could never become a photoplaywright.

But the individual who has both an active imagination and a knowledge of technique is bound to succeed sooner or later as a scenario writer, even though his first attempts at writing are not accepted.

I have dwelt upon the importance of studying the market, but even more important is the selection of the subject for the scenario.

I cannot help you select your plot, but I can tell you what subjects have grown gray with age and are useless from overwork. The criticism, "old idea," is one of the most popular reasons for rejection. The fact that so few people are able to write a script with an entirely new plot is why so many scripts are returned to the senders with thanks.

If you would write a saleable scenario remember that adaptations are not good subjects for

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your photoplay. Please note this: *Adaptations are undesirable material for the average studio.*

Unless you have a specific order from a scenario editor, do not attempt to unload on him *Evangeline*, Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream*, or any other classic. The same is true of the popular novel, the well-known verse, or song. Get your own building material and submit the product of your own brain.

Foremost among the old ideas is the nursemaid who substitutes her own offspring for the child of her wealthy employer; the brother and sister who are separated in infancy and reunited by means of a locket or birthmark; the daughter who marries the villain to keep the roof on poor old pa's and ma's heads by the mortgage route; the will hidden in grandfather's clock or in his big armchair; the baby shoe run down at the side that brings together the estranged young married couple; the hero or heroine who flags the train just in the nick of time to save a disastrous wreck; the bold bad man who is hurt and reforms after being nursed by the pure young thing, and a score or more other hackneyed plots.

These have all been used time and time again, and the scenario editor does not want them. If you send him such things they will in all probability come back to you by an early mail.

Old Ideas

Avoid as you would the relentless wheels of the speeding automobile the suggestive story. The censor man with his scissors will get you if you don't. He has made stories of that caliber absolutely out of the question. You cannot expect the film manufacturer to buy stories of this kind when he knows that he will be ordered to shelve them and keep them out of the sight of the impressionable mind of our young people. Or else he will be ordered to put so many cut outs in the story that it will lose all semblance of plot and interest.

A white-slave story with all its hideous details, a murder story showing the actual killing, blackmail, a robbery in which the thief is shown in the act of stealing are all subjects that the censor board will instantly taboo.

The censor board does not recognize the unwritten law, and no matter how great a sense of sympathy you feel for this sort of a criminal you must keep it out of your story.

The dictograph, the broken letter on the typewriter, the thumb print and the raising of a beard for disguise, at one time made exceptionally clever detective stories, but if you want to "get across" now as a writer of good two-reel melodramas don't try to hand in any of these aged themes.

I haven't begun to enumerate all the threadbare plots that I know, because I do not wish to

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discourage you before you have started, for there are hundreds of ways of dressing up your plots so that they will contain originality, punch, and action — the three essentials. We might call them the script trio, for they embody the physical and mental aspect of the photoplay, and bring into it the life and color that present interest.

We know that there are hundreds of pictures made every month, and unless these contained the requisite element they would never have been filmed. So don't be discouraged at the formidable array of worn out subjects, but be on the alert for new material and new ideas.

CHAPTER XIX

THE PLOT

I DOUBT not that every would-be motion picture writer has an idea in his head that he considers an original plot; a plot so big that Edward Sheldon, Brieux, or Belasco himself would steal it if they had the chance.

Possibly you may have such a plot. But remember, a string of incidents or a mere narrative without the backbone of a motive power is not a "world beater" of a plot.

In my last chapter I gave you a list of old ideas that had been retired from service because of old age. These plots have all become so well recognized that even the office boy in the film company would turn them down if he were asked for his opinion. I want you to remember this list when you get ready to write your masterpiece.

Don't misunderstand me. It is not to be expected that you will come forth with a startlingly new plot. It is hardly possible. Every one of the big stage successes and the most talked of photoplays are evolved from old plots. The author has simply taken an oldtime plot and by his excellent treatment given the world a seemingly

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new idea: the idea may be new, but there are no new *plots*.

The fact that new plots are scarce is no reason, however, for you to take a moss-covered theme and expect it to pass muster.

The first step in plot construction is to find the subject around which you wish to write your photoplay.

The trained writer has many methods of evolving his plot. But after all has been said and done it has been proven that inspiration is the most natural source from which ideas spring. A manufactured plot does not contain as much red blood as the thought that comes to you voluntarily. This inspiration, upon which successful books, plays, and scenarios have been written, does not come at our bidding, but rather when we least expect it. Sometimes in the night when we lie awake, unable to court the blessings of Morpheus; then again in the early morning when we awake and find the day is bright and full of promise, does this elusive spirit called inspiration seek us and give us that power the muses made famous.

Don't dally with inspiration when it comes to you, but make use of it at once. Jot down every thought, and put it carefully away until you are ready to make use of it.

The practical part of your photoplay can wait

The Plot

until another day; but it is the creative element that is hardest to get, and therefore the one that you must give time and earnest attention to acquiring. So remember, never lose a thought that has possibilities for building a photoplay.

You may think, "Oh, I can remember that idea," but you never can. After it gets away from you it is as difficult to find as the proverbial needle in the haystack. Save all this brain fag by acting on the moment and putting down any idea that comes to you in the guise of inspiration.

Those of my readers to whom inspiration means nothing will not perhaps be interested in the foregoing. Such persons want something tangible on which to build their plot formation, and nothing as uncertain as inspiration will do for them. Let them work out their destiny in their own way, but to those of us who spend part of our lives in the clouds, this same inspiration is not only a reasonable theory, but it is a true and absolute fact.

The title of a book, a verse, or a play will often contain a suggestion that will turn the trend of our thoughts into a channel that is most fruitful. In the notebook that each one of us must have, jot down that title that unfolds before your mind the idea for your scenario; then again, your own original idea for a title. Many and many a photo-

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play has been written from a title. Have a portion of your notebook reserved for titles. Then when the writing mood is upon you select one of these titles for the theme of your story.

A newspaper article will often suggest an idea for a photoplay. Truth is stranger than fiction, and nearly every day there is some story that might be used as the foundation for a scenario. For instance, the time the Titanic was lost at sea numberless tales of shipwrecks were written: so many that I had to refuse to read any more stories of persons who were cast into the ocean by a shipwreck.

This isn't an especially good example, for the reason that the wrecking of a ship would be an expensive and difficult production; still it serves to show that the newspapers are prolific as a source of getting suggestions for screen material.

People of various types often suggest an idea. Often an incident in an elevated train or street car, or the action of some of the passengers, will bring an idea to your mind. Waiting rooms, lobbies of hotels, the theaters, and, in fact, every place where people congregate are apt to contain embryo material.

I say embryo because the things you will notice are mere incidents, and probably not weighty enough to use as the basis of a scenario, but some-

The Plot

times fortified by other ideas you may evolve from them a plot for a story.

These little beginnings are called the germ plot and are invaluable in assisting you to find the real plot for your motion picture story.

There is so much to learn on this subject that unless we study it carefully we will not be able to grasp the full significance of its importance to us in the building of our photoplay.

CHAPTER XX

THE EVOLVING OF THE PLOT

LET me tell you what our respected friend Noah Webster calls a plot. He says that a plot is a casually connected series of motive incidents, which are gradually unfolded, sometimes by unexpected means:

Webster allows us the privilege of using those incidents we spoke of in our last chapter, but he insists that we join them with a motive. In other words, a mere narrative or a commonplace incident is not sufficient ground upon which to build your scenario. In simple language, there must be a reason why.

The mere fact that Mary Jane, a beautiful country lass, who sings in the village choir, meets John Alden; that he courts her; that they marry and live happily ever after in the little house on the hill is very pretty and romantic — *but*, it has no plot. There are no complications. We are delighted that pretty Mary Jane has won John, or vice versa, but we want John to have more of a struggle to win his fair bride.

There is no problem to solve, no obstacle to overcome. Just the fact that a country lass mar-

The Evolving of the Plot

ries a country boy is not reason enough for evolving a photoplay. Such a marriage is an every day occurrence. There is no plot, no climax, and no motive for your story.

If Mary Jane, a pretty country girl, who has always been in love with John and he with her, forgets John when the handsome stranger comes to the village we are adding to our theme.

Mary still sings, but only to the stranger. Mary's father is the storekeeper and has a sum of money in the safe. The stranger coaxes Mary to go with him to the city. She is infatuated and agrees to meet him down by the old oak tree. That night the safe in the store, which adjoins the house, is robbed and all the old man's money taken. The constable wakes up Mary's father. Then he discovers that his daughter is gone. John goes in search of her and finds them driving furiously for the next town. He accuses the stranger of stealing the money. The stranger and John have a terrible fight and John finds the old man's papers and money.

"He cannot arrest his own daughter," the stranger exclaims, but Mary, who knew nothing of the robbery, begs John to take her home. John shields her by declaring to her father and the sheriff that she heard the robbers and went in search of the money. The handsome stranger

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escapes, and Mary and John marry. We feel better satisfied now to let John have her. He overcomes an obstacle and adds enough plot to our story to make it interesting.

We can even give our scenario more weight by having John's father and the old man quarrel over a business transaction. The old man could be murdered and robbed. John's father could be accused, John goes in search of the handsome stranger to bring him to justice, and rescues Mary from his hands. At the trial, proof could be offered that it was the handsome stranger who murdered Mary's father when he offered resistance while the handsome stranger was robbing the safe. Then after John's father is cleared of the murder charge Mary and John get married.

This is just a way of showing you how one idea suggests another, and thus you can take a simple incident and build it up until you have both a plot and a climax.

Your climax is the big scene where all the loose threads are taken up and woven together into the big moment.

The motion picture story, like the short story, has the beginning and ending. All scenes lead to the climax, and have an indirect bearing upon this big scene or scenes in your photoplay.

An anti-climax is like too much whipped cream

The Evolving of the Plot

on your dessert; it leaves an overdone, inartistic finish. There are rare occasions when the anticlimax brings in a touch that is pleasing and helps end your story. But for the most part the audience is glad to have the story end right where the heroine tumbles into the hero's arms or the lost baby is restored to his waiting mother.

We have led up to the climax and given the audience such a chance to anticipate a big, smashing scene that anything further would be quite superfluous.

So keep in mind when you are unfolding your plot that each individual scene is given with the thought always in your mind of the climax that is to follow.

Any deviation from the path laid out will frequently introduce counterplots. These are a menace to continuity and will destroy, if overdone, the best plot ever invented. It is confusing both to the author and the audience to bring in additional threads that have no connection with the main theme. Sometimes in carrying out your plot these side issues are necessary, but I want to warn you against them. For the experienced writer, who knows how he can eventually gather up all the loose ends of his tale, the counterplot is not so serious a problem, but for those who are just venturing on the road of motion picture writing,

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the handling of more than just your main plot is something I cannot advise you to undertake.

Follow the path of least resistance and polish your own simple tale just the best way you know how, then later when you have learned the detail of plot formation venture into this other most intricate line if such is your desire.

Only keep always in mind the counterplot, like the anti-climax, seldom adds to your story, but it does frequently destroy its selling power and its artistic value.

The plot is to the story what the seed is to the plant. The very existence of one depends upon the success of the other. P-l-o-t, only a wee word of four letters, but of far greater importance than any other term in the photoplay vocabulary.

The plot of the short story pales into insignificance as compared with the value of the photoplay theme. The short story or novel can cover any deficiency in plot by a beautiful word painting of scenery or by character delineation, or again by sparkling dialogue and clever epigrams. These may help relieve the story from stupidity if it does not have a strong plot.

The photoplay, on the contrary, is dependent upon its plot for its interest. The clear, concise theme, that carries with it explanatory power, is the most essential part of your picture play.

The Evolving of the Plot

I have used, as a simple illustration, a simple drama. By adding bit by bit we evolved a plot. We learned that a reason why is a necessity to building a drama, but we said nothing about the comedy.

Some people foolishly think any old thing with one funny scene can be passed off as a wonderful comedy — that a comedy has no more use for a plot than a wagon has for a fifth wheel. Disabuse your mind of this fallacy as quickly as possible, because the birthright of a worth-while plot is a life-saver for your humorous photoplay.

The comedy *must* have at least a semblance of a plot. The comedy that is a series of chases, with the colored woman and the big fat policeman bringing up the rear, is by no means all the motive power you need. Disabuse your mind of this fallacy as quickly as possible, because that chase has to have a reason why, just the same as the little story of Mary, the village singer, who married steady-going John. There must be a reason for that chase. Just a zigzagging procession of people running around in a circle contains no humor unless you have a story to back up your fun.

There has yet to be written a good plotless comedy. It is not funny to have a big fat Dutchman slap a thin Irishman unless there is a reason

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for that slap. There is no humor in seeing two queerly dressed characters fall upstairs and tumble off the side of a building unless there is some motive for their antics.

A comedy is made up of complications, and upon the clever arrangement of its plot and its unexpected finish depend the success of your story. These complications are developed along with the plot. They are a part of it. Their mission is to make your photoplay gain its mission in life—that is, carry a laugh with it.

Lew Fields, who is one of the veteran comedians of the stage, has turned his attention to filming comedies. With his partner, Joe Weber, he is producing a series of motion pictures. He told me the reason why so many comedies fail to get over.

Mr. Fields said: "Comedy must have a plot. The so-called slapsticks, with just a lot of horse play and no connecting link are stupid. Every comedy I put on has a bit of heart interest and a real motive."

Mr. Fields is right. The story with the human touch, be it comedy or drama, is the one that pleases the public. Besides that, human touch is the backbone of your story.

CHAPTER XXI

THE CHOICE OF A SUBJECT

IN constructing your photoplay the choice of a subject is worthy of your most earnest consideration. Much of the success of your story depends upon the wisdom of your selection.

Most scenario departments employ expert readers whose duty it is to choose the available scripts from the great mass of material submitted to them for purchase. Such a reader must have the qualifications necessary to distinguish what will and what will not lend itself to picture adaptation.

Problem plays with an indefinite finish are never suitable for photoplays. Screen productions should stand out in bas relief with the clearness of a finely carved cameo. Clearness of action with no confusing scenes or unexplainable situations are absolutely essential in getting your story over.

I have yet to see the photoplay that ends in an uncertainty that has ever become a popular favorite.

Keep in mind in writing your photoplays that an unhappy ending leaves an unpleasant taste in the mouths of the audience. For that reason they

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are seldom desirable. Most of the companies prefer stories that end in the approved manner. The average "movie" audience would much rather have the heroine and her lover live happily ever after. The tragic story, with its harrowing scenes, appeals to only the few who are morbidly inclined. Avoid all grewsome subjects.

Sometimes from an artistic viewpoint you may be sacrificing your story by tacking on to it a conventional, happy ending that by no means belongs to it. When you feel this is true, and that you are spoiling your story, do not stretch a point just to make your audience satisfied. You are the author and to you belongs the privilege of selecting your own ending.

But, whenever possible, give your story an opportunity to carry a pleasant entertainment with it. "Laugh and the world laughs with you" is one of the most popular bits of sentiment ever written.

Sympathy is the keynote of the genuinely successful photoplay. Establish the sympathy of your audience for your leading character. Throw to him the interest so that he can receive the popular approval. Make your villain wear black robes as often as is consistent so that his character may be unmistakable.

Construct your story so that in the gradual de-

The Choice of a Subject

velopment of the plot both the hero and the villain are recognized. The oldtime novel villain is dead, but the new, refined gentlemen is just as dangerous and a great deal more plausible.

Bring into your photoplay whenever you see a fit opportunity a bit of human interest. An appeal that touches the heart and is realistic is much more entertaining than the wildly improbable tale.

If you can write a story that will bring a quick rush of tears and make those who see it choke with emotion, you are on the way to become a successful photoplaywright. Work out your plot with such delicacy of feeling that it can only be likened to the music that comes from a carefully tuned musical instrument.

Psychological plays, stories of occult science or religious discussions are seldom screenable, unless the master hand is present to make them adaptable. It requires unusual skill and knowledge to take a complex story and treat it in a manner that will make a satisfactory photoplay.

So, until you have passed beyond the amateur stage, be content with the simpler methods.

If you wish to write a simple little tale that contains more of a heart interest than a plot, often the introduction of a child will help your scenario. The Vitagraph "Sonny Jim" series

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are never rich in plot, but the cunning Bobby Connelly, who is Sonny Jim, makes the stories popular.

Hitch your wagon to a star, but in doing so never for a moment lose track of the importance of the humbler things in life.

In discussing still further the appropriate screen subject, I want to dwell for a moment on suspense. Every great story, play, or photoplay must have suspense—the intense moment, when the outcome is uncertain, when the unreal plays upon our emotions with the strength of the real. All this is a vital element to the success of our photoplay, and is called suspense.

I asked a friend who had seen *The Birth of a Nation* in New York what had impressed her as being the most remarkable feature of Griffith's colossal production. She answered immediately and without hesitation: "Its suspense. It carries you along to such a point of mental excitement that you fairly hang by the threads of uncertainty until the climax saves the situation."

David Griffith early learned the effectiveness of bringing suspense into his stories. When he was just starting on the road to fame with the Biograph Company he put into his simple little single-reel stories a suspense that made them better than any pictures that were being turned out by

The Choice of a Subject

the other film companies. So the companies came to use as their slogan, "As good as the Biograph pictures." In those days the film concerns were all trying to manufacture films that compared favorably with the Griffith productions.

I have never seen a Griffith picture that did not contain suspense. *The Avenging Conscience* is full of it. David Griffith is an artist. He works upon the emotions of the audience, for he realizes that a play in which the outcome is a foregone conclusion is the essence of stupidity.

William Lord Wright says of suspense in the photoplay:

The art of suspense is another factor in constructing the photoplay plot. To keep the audience guessing, to have them breathlessly awaiting the denouement is a fine art. Suspense is an essential sensation to the dramatic photoplay when not overdone. It requires careful planning. Each incident must be logical, a consistent step to the next scene, and a careful preparation of earlier action is necessary to fulfill the expectation that has been deliberately fostered.

The girl is betrothed to the soldier. The false friend loves her and carries the report of the soldier's death to her. She, after much coaxing, consents to marry the friend. Meanwhile, in a hospital in a distant country the soldier lies sick.

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The wedding day is set. The soldier gets out of bed and makes an attempt to get to his sweetheart.

He is so weak he falls exhausted. The wedding festivities go on. The guests arrive; the bride and groom stand before the minister. The ceremony starts. The soldier, after harrowing experiences, arrives just before the fateful words are spoken.

That is suspense. We do not know whether the false friend or the brave soldier will win the girl. We keep up the suspense by flashing from the girl and the false friend to the soldier. We are familiar with the progress the soldier is making, but we do not know whether or not he will get to her side in time.

CHAPTER XXII

STUDY GOOD WRITERS

THE greatest play ever written is built on the base of a simple idea. You will find, if you dissect it, that its foundation is elementary, and that it has reached its distinction by the clever treatment it received at the hands of the author.

Never overlook the commonplace things in life in your efforts to find the unusual plot. It is these same unpretentious things that unfold for you the possibilities for a story. The hearts and minds of the people who live in the ordinary walks of life contain a wealth of valuable plot material. The warmth of human affection and the subjects that find the whole world kin are the real source of every fruitful plot germ.

Daddy Long-Legs, the play that was dramatized from Jean Webster's story, had a phenomenal success. Nowhere could a less complicated, lighter story be found than this simple play, yet it appealed to the universal heart.

I have always found, in seeking plot material, that a study of the authors who have arrived has been of untold value. Study their style, review their plots, and you will find that you can cor-

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rect many of your own faults by a careful comparison.

Thomas Hardy, for example, is a master of style and a writer of pure English. His *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* was made into a screen adaptation by the Famous Players Company. It has sufficient plot and contains enough action to make a most interesting photodrama; but, strange as it may seem, the stage version was far superior to the picture.

Thackeray and Scott's books are worth studying for their plot development, though few of them will lend themselves to the screen. Thackeray has an entertaining way of telling his story, but he writes with that oldtime conviction that all women are either saints or devils. All his characters are either Amelia Sedleys or Becky Sharps, and nowhere does he strike a happy medium. But in spite of the fact that he would have us believe all clever women wicked and all good women stupid, Thackeray presents in his *Pendennis*, *Vanity Fair*, and other novels some excellent examples of plot building.

Scott's beautiful oldtime romances, while seldom screenable, still furnish plot examples. *Ivanhoe* was filmed by the Imp Company and made a very pretty picture with King Baggot and lovely Leah Baird in the leading roles.

Study Good Writers

Dickens in his stories of the poorer classes wrote with a realism that has given him a never-to-be-forgotten place in the annals of the literature of the world. His *Pickwick Papers* were immortalized by the late John Bunny, but only a few of Dickens' books are screen material for the reason that so much of their cleverness depends upon the inimitable Dickens description.

George Eliot, the world's most famous woman writer, endowed each of her stories with a birth-right of individuality. She wrote of the common people and of the common things, but many of her books are imbued with touches of her own tragic life.

George Eliot handles her characters in a masterly fashion, playing on the emotions of her readers with all the power of her wonderful skill. *The Mill on the Floss* is said to be the story of her own early, starved life.

As an example of originality of thought and plot construction George Eliot furnishes almost a textbook for the amateur writer.

I am treating the style of these writers aside from their value as photoplaywrights. A plot is a plot, whether it be written for a novel, play, or scenario. The reason many of these oldtime masterpieces contain so little scenario value is because of the fact that most of their charm lies in the

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conversation — in other words, they are too talky-talky.

I do not want you to copy anyone's style of expression, any more than I want you to copy another writer's idea. All I ask is that in studying plot development you read the works of the better class of authors.

Develop your own style. Create along with your own plot an originality. Make your story of such strength in plot, style, and finish that it will attract the attention of the most cynical editor who ever sat behind a scenario desk.

One script sold contains far more than the money you receive. It means your entrée into the field of successful photoplaywrights. Once recognized, your path is much less thorny, your way is clearer, and the chance to dispose of your other photoplays looms in sight like a happy star of hope.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE CLIMAX

IT IS a wise writer who knows when his climax is reached. The surest proof that you have graduated from the amateur grade into the professional class is the manner in which you handle your climactic situation.

The gathering together of all the loose ends of your story and weaving them into the one big situation is the climax. It is the acme of your emotion, the height of your suspense and the rounding out of your story.

Your atmosphere should be felt early in your story. All your action should be directed with careful aim toward that big moment of solving the problem or of explaining the suspense that you have created. The end is frequently the climax, and when this is true make your final stop as logical as you can. Develop this situation with all the skill you have at your command.

When the end follows your climax it means that there is some sort of suspense still unsolved. It can be told in a few additional scenes. The conclusive portion of your photoplay has been given in the climax and only a small part re-

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mains to be told. Too much action coming after your climax weakens the supreme moment of denouement.

The anti-climax is generally as valuable as a fifth wheel and seldom carries any sort of an appeal.

Take that famous oldtime play *Rosemary*. The third act ends with Rosemary in the arms of her youthful lover, while the disconsolate and noble man, whom she has given up unselfishly, determines to spend his life in abject devotion to her memory. The last act comes fifty years later and brings upon our vision an old man ninety years of age, doddering and toothless. All the sweet romance is gone and the audience leaves dissatisfied and unhappy that old age should have wiped even the remembrance of sweet Rosemary from the memory of this pathetic old man.

On the other hand, if the story contained no anti-climax and ended with Rosemary in the arms of the man she expected to marry the climax would have been much more effective.

Rosemary is, of course, a successful play — in fact, almost a classic — and the splendid acting of John Drew compensated in a measure for the futility of the last act. Still, the aftermath is an anti-climax and unnecessary for the artistic finish of the story.

The Climax

Epes W. Sargent says: "The best climax is that which comes as a surprise and satisfies the wishes of the audience after it has been made to appear that this consummation is utterly impossible."

This must be skillfully planned else the climax will be too abrupt. Move your scenes toward that established center where the big moment of emotional height is to be placed, but give, if possible, the impression that the desired conclusion cannot be accomplished. Then, when the hoped-for but unexpected moment is realized, your audience will find your narrative or photoplay of much greater interest than if you had given them a conclusion such as they had expected.

To have made up our minds that the big obstacle placed in the road of John is to be obliterated, and that his marriage to Jane is a fixed certainty, would be to rob your narrative of all its interest. But to lead the audience step by step to the point where the marriage of John to Jane seems almost impossible, and then, by a clever twist, make the wedding of this popular young couple possible is to have the most effective and satisfactory climax within your power to achieve.

A surprise is always welcome, and the successful writer knows how best to play upon the emo-

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tions of his audience, be they picture or story audiences.

William Lord Wright expresses this playing on the emotions of the audience with the very apt and expressive term of the "tremolo touch."

The "tremolo touch," begging Mr. Wright's pardon, leads us into the subchannel of the climax, the punch, which is in itself enough material for a chapter.

Do not confuse crisis and climax. Remember they are not the same. The crisis often leads up to the climax and assists by its action in bringing about the climax and often anti-climax.

The climax, we have decided, is in a way the solution of your play. It is a disposition of your characters and affords the greatest possibility for dramatic element if properly evolved.

Do not have a series of small or too many crises. Frequently one crisis after another will lead up to the denouement. If we do not get these crises under control they may make our story end differently and perhaps in a weaker manner than we at first planned.

Epes W. Sargent, in a recent article in the *Moving Picture World*, has given a lucid account of the crisis and climax. His illustration seems to be especially suited to those who are having difficulty in placing the two in their proper niche.

The Climax

Mr. Sargent in this comprehensive article says:

A crisis is an almost climax. You think when the crisis comes the story must end, but something happens and it is even more intensely interesting than before because of the crisis.

Mr. Sargent gives as his example this illustration:

Jane is cook in a mining camp. She loves Jack, and Henry loves her. Jack wants her, too, and she promises to marry him, but on the day of the wedding Henry comes along with the two best horses in the studio outfit, slings Jane to the hurricane deck of one of them and dashes off. If that was the last we ever saw of Jane it would be the climax of a story, but the script says that Jack starts in pursuit, and so it is not the climax but merely a crisis. Before, it was just the story of two men and a woman. Now we have the added factor of the consequences of the abduction. It is no longer a couple of polite courtships of the same woman. The crisis brings in a new plot action and the interest grows. Now Jack and his friends catch up with Henry and Jane. Henry shoots Jack. If he killed him that might be the climax, but he merely wings him. This delays pursuit, and Henry gets a better lead. It is a crisis, and once more the interest grows.

Henry takes Jane to a deserted shack. Jane unwisely prefers death to dishonor, though Henry merely wants to marry her. That gets Henry sore and he says he'll do anything to be obliging. He starts to draw his gun, but Jane jumps on him and

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wrests the gun away. Here is another crisis. We see Jack and his friends riding down the trail. They pass the point where we saw Henry quit the trail for the unmarked path to the shack. This is a climax. Jack is riding past and the chance of rescue is lost. But just then Henry hurls a stool at Jane. It knocks the gun from her hand, but it is discharged. She falls to the floor and Henry picks up the gun and stands over her. Here are two crises, one after the other. We go back to Jack. He hears the shot. The little posse turns back and rides toward the shack. Henry stands over Jane and prepares to shoot. Just at this moment he hears the sound of horses and dashes from the cabin. Jack rushes in. They clinch. Here is another crisis. Jack is the victor, but Henry shakes him off and starts to make his escape. The sheriff shoots him. Jane staggers from the shack and falls into Jack's arms. Climax.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE "PUNCH"

TO HAVE your climax fall flat means that your story loses its "punch." A story without a "punch" is like food without salt. No matter how clever the narrative you have created, if you do not develop your climax properly you can never hope to interest the scenario editor in your production.

If your plot is carried along with pleasant smoothness and enough obstacles to establish interest, and you crown all your efforts with a smashing climax, you have succeeded in writing an excellent photoplay.

But how many writers succeed in giving their scenario a climax that contains "punch?" Not many, else there would be fewer "We regret that we find this story unavailable for our needs" returned to us with our photoplay.

Next to the weak plot criticism, I found during my three years as editor that one of the most patent reasons for failure was the inability of the photoplaywright to know when to end his story. Time after time I have rejected scripts that started out in a most promising manner, but whose

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climax left them so barren of interest that they contained no possibility of a good screen story.

Many of my readers are asking, "What is 'punch'?" Punch is the most vital part of your scenario. It is the very soul and life. Without punch no scenario can possibly possess selling power.

A terse but highly expressive word is "punch," and one that is vastly important in our photoplay vocabulary. Everything that makes your script saleable is contained in this little word. It is the motive power that lies back of the action.

Punch is the heart interest, the suspense, and the gripping interest that make your scenarios worth while.

Is punch a tangible, physical thing or is it mental? William Lord Wright says it is both, and E. E. Wickes of the *Writers' Magazine* says:

A "punch" is hypnotism and magnetism combined — the something in all objects animate and inanimate that demands attention. It makes us forget our surroundings, steals our attentions, and forces us to think, hope, fear, laugh or cry. It may be a surprise, but it must be a natural surprise, the logical effect of a certain cause. Punch may be nerve-racking suspense without the sudden twist — the suspense resulting from acts that are ever subject to change. You know that a play will develop along certain lines, everything points to it, but someone

The "Punch"

keeps bobbing in and out that has the power to drive all before him in another direction, and the uncertainty as to just what he will do keeps you on edge and furnishes the "punch."

"Punch" is the motor that makes the painter, the writer, the genius, and gives them their talent. No two people ever agreed upon its meaning, but all must agree that it is the heart interest, the main idea, and the suspense of a story.

CHAPTER XXV

THE COMEDY

THE most difficult photoplay in the world is the good comedy. Few persons are able to conceive of a scenario that is spontaneously funny, for the very simple reason that there are few people with the sense of humor developed.

A funny incident with no plot is not comedy screen material, for along with it you need a plot.

Subtle humor is the most effective kind, and because of this fact it is not always the comedy that reads funny on paper that will carry a laugh on the screen. Frequently the most rollicking comedy does not sound as if it could make anyone laugh. Its reading carries no more suggestion of merriment than a graveyard or a pair of crutches. But the comedy is there, and the wise director, who can scent a comedy as far as he can see, will at once realize the possibility of the story as a laugh-producing comedy.

Avoid making any one class of people ridiculous; keep away from affliction and death; keep away from drunkenness, and especially avoid all suggestions of vulgarity.

A few years ago it was necessary to economize

The Comedy

in the production of a comedy, for the producer was unwilling to spend as much for a comedy as he did for the big dramatic picture.

Times have changed somewhat since the invasion of Charley Chaplin, Marie Dressler, and others, who are high salaried comedians. The film manufacturer paying the Chaplin salary cannot afford to worry about the cost of production, stories, sets, and the like. He must be willing to pay as much for the humorous story as for the big dramatic production.

There are various kinds of comedy — the farce, the slapstick, the refined or comedy drama, and the straight comedy. The slapstick seems to be the variety of fun most in vogue just at this time.

The Keystone Company with their company of side-splitting comedians were the first company to make a specialty of the rough and tumble pictures which were billed Keystone-Slapsticks, and found tremendous favor in the eyes of the picture going public.

So rough were these pictures, and so daring were the acts the Keystone players were called upon to perform, that a hospital for the wounded and disabled Keystonites was established at their California studio.

Charlie Chaplin, Mabel Normand, Mack Sennet, and Ford Sterling with a score of other screen

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comedians originated this new form of fun, and gave the Keystone pictures their first popularity.

That many writers have tried to write slapstick comedies and failed, is evident from the letter I have just received from Mack Sennet, formerly actor, and director-general of the Keystone company, and now associated with the new Triangle company (the Griffith-Ince-Sennet), capitalized at five million dollars.

Mr. Sennet says:

Where are all the comedy writers? Where are their minds? The world is full of comedy, and yet of all the thousands of stories that are received by the Keystone scenario department there is only an occasional idea that is new and bright. We maintain a staff of writers who do our work simply because that is the only way we can obtain new comedy ideas. I believe the lack of comedy of a marketable sort is based on lack of study and thought on the part of the free-lance writers. If they would study the comedy films shown and use a little analysis and brain effort, they might assume the right mental attitude and increase their profits.

I ask my readers to study what Mr. Sennet says. Apply it to the drama as well as to the comedy. Then, for the sake of your future welfare, I beg of you don't submit any old idea that comes into your head. Wait until you are sure

The Comedy

you have a winner, then submit it. "Be sure you are right, then go ahead."

It seems to me, that with the Keystone Company not only desirous but anxious to buy first-class comedy material, the writer who can evolve a comedy plot has a big opportunity to find a ready and profitable market for his photoplays.

The farce comedy is always saleable if it is clever; the pretty comedy-drama and the straight comedy are also excellent material for those who can write humorous photoplays.

With the companies so ready and willing to buy good comedy, there should be an incentive to working hard to bring your scripts up to the required standard.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE MODEL COMEDY SCENARIO

A WRITER, who has proven that writing comedies as a free-lance agent is exceedingly profitable, is Epes W. Sargent. He is the author of numberless comedies produced by the majority of the film companies. Mr. Sargent has sent me a copy of one of the comedies that has been accepted and produced. I want *you* to absorb his construction and to notice particularly how he gets his funny situations across.

"HIS SUICIDE"

SYNOPSIS

Bill Boggs is tired of life, also tired of wife. She abuses him dreadfully, and won't lend him the clothes line to hang himself with. Instead, she makes him put the line back and then hangs out the clothes, but Bill gets tangled in a sheet and musses it up and she jumps on him for the three million, nine hundred and sixty-four thousand, seven hundred and fifty-sixth time. He goes into the house and gets a gun, but she demands what he means by contemplating getting the place all mussed up. The knife route is denied him, because he picks out the best carving knife, but he wanders down the street and gets an idea. He buys a gallon of gasoline and goes back home to drink it all. Then he blows on lighted matches until he explodes. Sympathetic bystanders

The Model Comedy Scenario

are powerfully affected by Myra's grief until she explains that she is weeping because Bill carried no fire insurance. They drop her to the cold ground and leave her alone with one of Bill's boots and her great sorrow.

Cast

Bill.

Myra.

A couple of neighbors.

Scene Plot

Dining-room — 1, 2, 3, 5, 11, 13.

Back door — 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14, 17, 21, 23, 25, 27.

Yard — 7, 9, 20, 22, 24, 26, 28.

Street — 15, 19.

Gasoline tank — 16, 18.

Action

1. — Dining-room. Bill and Myra at table. He has napkin under chin. Drinking coffee. Speaks. Myra gets sore. Throws a plate at him. Startles him. He spills coffee all over his napkin. She jumps up from table. Comes around. Grabs him by hair. Pounds his face on the table. Happens to push it in the creamed potatoes.
2. — *Closeup* of Bill with face smeared. Sad expression.
3. — Dining-room. Bill grabs for napkin to clean face. Gets table cloth instead. Upsets things. She boxes his ears. Knocks him off chair. Flounces out. Bill picks himself up slowly.
4. — Back door. Pail on bench beside door. Myra comes out with tin basin. Fills basin, bounces into house again.

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5. — Dining-room. Myra comes in. Carries basin, grabs Bill by hair. Bumps him down into seat. Washes his face. Scrubs vigorously. Bill struggles. Upsets basin over Myra, she gets sore, pounds him over head with basin, chases him out.
6. — Back door. Bill comes out. Very mournful. Filled with self-pity. Sits on bench. Gets too far out. Bench goes down with him. Water bucket slides down and upsets on him. Myra comes to door. Sees. Pounds him with broom, chases him out.
7. — Yard. Clothesline up. Bill comes in. Doesn't look where he is going. Line catches him. He tumbles. Gets idea. Takes line down. One end about neck. Myra dashes in. Basket of clothes. Grabs line. Pulls Bill over, making him put line up. Tells him to hand clothes. Bill starts. She exits.
8. — Back door. Myra comes in. Turns to look back. Content that Bill is busy, enters house.
9. — Yard. Bill with mouth full of clothes pins hanging up clothes. Gets tangled in a sheet. Falls. Myra runs in. Picks him up. Looks at sheet. Sore. "He isn't even able to hang out clothes. Get out there." Bill exits. Myra starts to hang up clothes.
10. — Back door. Bill comes in. Goes to sit down. Remembers. Nix on a second fall. Goes into house.
11. — Dining-room. Bill enters. Goes to sideboard. Takes out big revolver. Looks at it affectionately. Holds to head. Scared. Shakes head. Starts again. Undecided.

The Model Comedy Scenario

12. — Back door. Myra comes in with empty clothes basket. Looks inside. Rushes into house.
13. — Dining-room. Bill still looking at gun. Myra rushes in. Throws clothes basket over his head. Bill drops. She picks him up. Takes gun from him indignantly.

Cut in:

“DO YOU WANT TO MUSS THE PLACE
ALL UP!”

Back to scene.

The suggestion dampens Bill's spirits. He weeps profusely on Myra's shoulders. She moves away. He falls forward. She exits. He gets up. Picks up carving knife. Looks at it.

14. — Back door. Myra comes out. Wants water. Bill sidles past. She catches him. He tries to hide knife. She suspects. Searches. Sees it. Sore.

Cut in:

“MY BEST KNIFE ”

Back to scene.

She jabs at him. He dodges. Starts out. She lands a kick on him.

15. — Street by Standard Oil. Car runs past and down to tanks. Bill wanders down.
16. — Gas tank. Car getting gas. Driver pays attendant. Backs away. Narrowly avoids running Bill down. Bill speaks to attendant. Wants some gas. Attendant exits.
17. — Back door. Myra comes out. Calls Bill. No response. Sore. Enters house.
18. — Back to 16. Gallon can filled. Bill pays. Exits.

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19. — Street as in 15. Bill comes from yard. Starts to drink. Cop enters. Takes can. Smells. Moves him on. Bill meanders away toward his house.
20. — Another part of yard. Bill enters. Unscrews lid of can. Starts to drink.
21. — Back door. Myra comes to door. Locks. Calls. Starts to run.
22. — Yard. Bill finishing the can. Myra runs in. Grabs can from him. Turns it upside down. None left. Smells. Speaks.
23. — Back door. Myra comes in with can. Turns and looks. Yells.
24. — *Closeup* of yard. Bill lighting matches and blowing on them.
25. — Back door. Myra watching trick, bench, etc., fall as she falls, presumably blown back by force of explosion.
26. — Yard. Set off smoke bomb and start to turn on the smoke. Just a flash.
27. — Back door. Myra picks herself up. One or two people run in. All run out of scene.
28. — Yard 11. Myra and others run in search. One finds a shoe. Another a hat. They hand to Myra. She has hysterics. Two men hold her, one on either side. Seek to console her. Myra speaks.

Cut in:

“AND HE CARRIED NO FIRE INSURANCE,
EITHER ”

Back to scene.

The men look at each other. That's the limit. They let her drop to the ground. They're through. Myra sits on ground and sobs as picture out.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE ONE OR TWO REEL PLAY

THE most serious problem that confronts the amateur is the difficulty in determining the length of a photoplay.

What is suitable for one-reel and what is sufficient plot material for a two or multiple reel scenario, is a question that each beginner asks when he reaches the plot-evolving stage.

To know when to label a story "one-reel," and when to give it greater length, is a subject that requires both study and experience.

In these days, when explanatory subtitles have come into their own, more footage is allowed to tell a story. No story should ever be cramped and compressed into a thousand feet, that could be made into a clearer and a better story by putting it into two, three, or four reels. On the other hand, no tale, that could just as well be presented in one thousand feet, should be padded and made into a longer photoplay.

Use discretion in determining the length of your scenario.

Miss Mabelle Heikes Justice, who is the author of many successful motion picture stories, has

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written the following interesting discussion on the one- and two-reel play.

It is quite a question sometimes, I think, for beginners to know whether the material they have on hand is suitable for a one-reel or a two-reel photoplay. As a general rule, the subject matter looks a great deal larger through their mind's eye than when it is transcribed to actual scenes.

Nothing takes up plot material faster than the continued action required to make a successful photoplay, and this is the sole reason why so many aspirants for screen recognition have not yet mastered this alluring art. I have had people tell me a story as fully as they were capable of expressing it, feeling assured at the same time that their plot was a good one, when I saw the material would scarcely cover fifteen actual scenes of action. In other words, the story could not even be padded out to a good half-reel play, and they could not understand when I explained the reason why. The motion picture camera eats up scenes like a hungry dragon.

Therefore the argument stands much more in favor of the treatment of stories in one reel in respect to the new writer, at least.

The alert film editor will always detect the new writer at a glance, and his script will stand a far

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greater chance of being thoroughly read, for its original ideas, in one reel than if it presents an amateurish spreading out of a weaker story in two reels. It is when a beginner has written a one-reel script in which the editor finds enough strong material to reconstruct into a two-reel play, that the writer may rejoice and feel that he has at last found himself in the photoplay field. So never try to draw upon your plot and make it bigger than it really is.

Plots are too elastic as they are. But the good, sound, concise plot, around which a human story may be evolved, will always make itself seen and felt even at a casual glance, and no editor will pass it by without weighing all its possibilities for screen production.

Try at first then to give your screen message in a good, one-reel play. If you have acceptance, which is likely, and after you have written eight or ten scripts that have been produced, you may find your vision *broadening*, and your stories too big for the confinement of one reel.

It is then and only then that you may safely step into the realm of the two-reel and multiple, for now your own plan of construction is larger and you may attempt much more screen license than in the one-reel story. But it can seldom, if ever, be accomplished by the amateur, and, in

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writing these days, hold yourself to the human things around you, vital to present day interests. No one need draw upon antiquity, or lure visions from the clouds. Write something that tells the simple truth, and yet at the same time stimulates the finer ideals and higher instincts of humanity.

Make people see life as it *is*, without preaching. Touch their emotions, but leave them cleared like the keen air after a refreshing rain.

But that requires the skill of a screen artist, you will say. Usually so, but not always. If you are sincere in this work, you will help yourself without leaning upon others. Give forth the best that is in you, and some day you may write a photoplay that will make a sensation because it is so simple, so sweet, so true to life.

CHAPTER XXVIII

"THE MASKED WRESTLER"

THE two-reel photoplay *The Masked Wrestler* is a drama in two reels written by M. Rayon, the author of *God's Inn by the Sea*, *An Old Man's Folly*, and other well-known scenarios. His play was produced by the Essanay Film Company, and I am giving you the script that was used in making the pictures.

I am using this scenario as an example of good construction. Study the form carefully, and the way the plot is evolved. This is the form used in constructing the many multiple-reel plays produced by this company.

Graustark, *In the Palace of the King*, and *The White Sister* are in five or six reels, but their manner of presentation is similar to that of *The Masked Wrestler*. *The Masked Wrestler*, as a two-reel photoplay, will serve you as a model for not only the two-reel plays, but also for the three-, four-, and five-reel photodramas.

SYNOPSIS

Act 1

Louis de Luzon, a wealthy young Parisian, has become the idol of all Paris through wrestling and concealing his identity with a black mask. Possessing

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a wonderful physique, he has met and defeated every champion in Europe, and is the recipient of flattering attention from all who watch his work on the mat. Here it is he meets Margery Winter, a pretty American heiress, who lives in Paris with her father. Margery throws the Masked Wrestler an emerald ring one night at the Arena, and is charmed when he steps to their box and thanks her gracefully.

Learning from her butler that De Luzon knows the Masked Wrestler, she calls upon Louis at his apartment and begs him to extend the man of mystery an invitation to a ball she is giving. Carrying out his dual personality, Louis agrees, and later accepts the invitation to the ball. He attends, masked, and is the cynosure of all eyes. Here he meets M. Lefevre, an adventurer, who, out of jealousy, offers Louis an insult and is instantly knocked down. To avoid police interference a duel is arranged in the Winters' gymnasium.

Act 2

The duel is fought and Lefevre neatly disarmed after a brilliant exhibition of swordsmanship. Lefevre leaves, swearing vengeance. A week later a great match is arranged between the Masked Wrestler and the "Lion," a famous Alsatian champion of giant stature. The Masked Wrestler having fallen in love with Margery, writes her, saying it will be the Masked Wrestler's last match, and that he will unmask himself to her — after the bout — at her salon. On the night of the match Margery accidentally discovers a note at the arena written to the "Lion" by Lefevre, offering ten thousand francs for the unmasking of the man of mystery. She manages to toss

The Masked Wrestler

it into the arena, and the Masked Wrestler is put on his guard. He defeats the "Lion" after a terrific combat, confronts Lefevre with the note and has him arrested. Later he appears at the Winter salon, un-masks himself to Margery and her father and clears up her astonishment with a confession of his dual personality. Then, in the moonlit conservatory, he pleads his love and finds it fully returned by Margery. So it is the Masked Wrestler passes into history.

"THE MASKED WRESTLER"

Cast of Characters

The Masked Wrestler — a handsome athlete of twenty-seven, wonderful physique and grace. He has defeated every champion in France. The idol of all Paris, who masks simply to arouse curiosity and conceal his real identity. A perfect cavalier and expert swordsman.

Margery Winter — young American heiress of twenty-one, living with her father in Paris. A beautiful, impulsive girl, who falls in love with the Masked Wrestler and determines to know him.

John Winter — Margery's father. A typical American millionaire of fifty, who loves his daughter devotedly.

M. Lefevre — a French adventurer who aims to marry Margery and gain her fortune. A thoroughly polished scoundrel who plots the Masked Wrestler's downfall. An excellent swordsman.

The "Lion" — a brawny athlete of giant stature. A man of probably thirty-five or forty. A master of Graeco-Roman wrestling (a character to be selected with care and good judgment).

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Miscellaneous

A Champion — a sturdy wrestler who is defeated by the Masked Wrestler in the first bout. To be cast with good judgment.

Francois — Louis' valet, a veteran of the Napoleonic wars who loves his master. An excellent bit.

Butler — at the Winters' home. Typical French type, about forty.

Maid — in Margery's boudoir. Pretty and typically French.

Footman — at the Winters' home.

Two attendants — at the arena.

Gendarme — at the arena. Good type.

Audience at arena — the number to be selected by director in proportion to the size of arena set. People should be carefully selected, as they appear in evening dress. A typical French audience.

Handsome ensemble at the Winter Salon — ten or fifteen couple of good looking, well-dressed men and women. Doubled from the audience at the arena. (To be selected carefully for good looks and wardrobe.)

Spectators at gymnasium — half dozen men, some sports, some gentlemen, who are watching the "Lion" train.

SCENE PLOT

<i>Int. C.U.*</i>	<i>Setting</i>	<i>Scenes</i>
x	The arena (French foreground)	1, 33, 35, 37, 40, 43, 45, 48, 50
x x	Box at arena	2, 4, 34, 36, 38, 41, 47, 51

* C.U. = Closeup.

The Masked Wrestler

SCENE PLOT

<i>Int.</i>	<i>C.U.*</i>	<i>Setting</i>	<i>Scenes</i>
x	x	Wrestler in arena	3
x	x	Against portieres	11, 13, 15, 20
x		Louis' den (luxurious)	5, 7, 26, 30
x		Beautiful French salon	6, 8, 9, 10, 12, 14, 19, 21, 23, 27
x	x	Conservatory against palms	16, 18, 52
x	x	Against palms	17
x		Winter gymnasium	21½, 22, 24
x	x	Corner of gymnasium	4½, 25, 28, 30
x	x	Corner of private room in gymnasium	29
x		Door of dressing-room	31
x	x	Lefevre's box at arena	32, 39, 42, 46, 49
x	x	In arena	44

"THE MASKED WRESTLER"

PART ONE

SCENE A. — *Fade in on* twenty or twenty-five foot flash of the Masked Wrestler (against black velvet) wearing long black cloak and black mask, with a quick movement he throws off cloak and stands in wrestling costume, silk tights, rubber sandals laced well above ankles, and trunks of leopard skin, with knotted scarf at waist, nude from waist up, showing his wonderful development. *Fade out.*

SCENE B. — *Fade in on* fifteen-foot flash of Margery, against black velvet, playfully patting head of beautiful horse and laughing roguishly. *Fade out.*

* C.U. = Closeup.

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SUBTITLE 1. THE FAMOUS MASKED WRESTLER, THE IDOL OF ALL PARIS

SCENE 1. — Interior. Arena, an oval, padded space about fifty feet long by thirty feet wide. Surrounding the arena the seats are built up in raised tiers, with an entrance in the center leading to dressing rooms. Around oval, slightly raised from ground level, are the boxes, each holding about four people. (Camera on this scene shooting from a center box, French foreground effect on wrestlers.)

Discovered: As scene fades in the Masked Wrestler and opponent, a trained athlete, are wrestling. The Masked Wrestler's agility, grace, and science are at once noticeable. (The scene should run about one hundred feet, and a number of Graeco-Roman holds should be introduced.) The Masked Wrestler is finally victor after a fine bout, winning by throwing his opponent over his head for a fall. At once the crowd goes wild, the Masked Wrestler is showered with bouquets of flowers, etc. Standing in center of ring he bows gracefully to all sides of arena.

SUBTITLE 2. MARGERY WINTER, A YOUNG AMERICAN HEIRESS, AND HER FATHER

SCENE 2. — Interior. Arena *closeup* at one of the boxes. Margery and her father discovered applauding. Margery has fallen in love with the Masked Wrestler. "Isn't he wonderful, Father?" she cries. Throws flowers.

SCENE 3. — Interior. Arena *closeup* of Masked Wrestler. Flowers are scattered about. He is bowing; suddenly he starts, looks down quickly and picks up her flowers. He gazes off scene toward box. At-

The Masked Wrestler

tendant up with cloak. Louis dons cloak, then with flowers in hand steps toward box.

SCENE 4. — Interior. Arena *closeup* same as Scene 2. At box. The Masked Wrestler on with flowers. Margery extends her hand over box. Louis takes it, kisses it gallantly, then registers to flowers.

SUBTITLE 3. MASKED WRESTLER: "THANK
YOU, MADEMOISELLE, YOUR FLOWERS
ARE BEAUTIFUL"

Back to scene.

The Masked Wrestler bows gallantly. Margery thanks him smilingly. The Masked Wrestler bows and exits. Margery looks after him with wide eyes — he is her King — impulsively she turns to father, who smilingly humors her whim.

SCENE 4½. — Interior. Corner of gymnasium. Masked Wrestler on, he removes cloak; second, takes off mask. *Fade out.*

SCENE 5. — Interior. Louis' den. Portieres back center open on another room of suite. Door right opens on bedroom. Den is luxuriously furnished. Table desk down stage on line, filled with books, antiques, French phone, etc. Walls are covered with tapestry hangings, held up with Arabian spears. Deer horns, rapiers, swords, and pistols adorn the walls, also one or two paintings. Furniture is heavily carved. Scattered about room are boxing gloves, a punching bag in one corner, dumb-bells of various weights, etc. Louis de Luzon — a young Parisian. Short flash of Louis at desk reading. Valet enters, etc.

SCENE 6. — Interior. *Closeup* at lady's dressing

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table in boudoir. Daintily and richly set. French phone on table. Margery in pretty negligee, dreaming over the Masked Wrestler—she has fallen in love with him. "I wonder who he is?" she muses. Maid enters. Margery starts to excuse her, has idea, sends maid out.

SUBTITLE 4. "I WONDER IF LOUIS WOULD KNOW THE MASKED WRESTLER?"

Back to scene.

Margery determines to call on Louis next morning.

SUBTITLE 5. MORNING

SCENE 7.—Interior. Den same as Scene 5. Louis, dressed in neat morning suit, seated at table desk on line reading French paper. Chuckles over account of bout. Valet enters through portieres—"Young lady to see you, sir." Valet has card on tray, Louis takes card. "Margery Winter!" Louis studies, then registers to admit her. Valet exits, returns followed by Margery, dressed in stunning morning gown. Louis rises, pulls up a chair, Margery is seated, then gazes about den, compliments him on furnishings. He smilingly thanks her. She regards him seriously, then speaks:

SUBTITLE 6. MARGERY: "LOUIS, I'M VERY ANXIOUS TO MEET THE MASKED WRESTLER"

LOUIS: "WHY NOT INVITE HIM TO YOUR RECEPTION NEXT WEEK?"

Back to scene.

Margery registers this earnestly. Louis surprised, but conceals it admirably. Margery takes an invita-

The Masked Wrestler

tion from her bag, extends it to him. "You will do this favor?" she asks. For a moment he gazes into her eyes, then smilingly takes invitation, rises, nods head and agrees to help her. She rises, thanks him warmly, he takes out watch, registers. *Cut to:*

SUBTITLE 7. LOUIS: "I SHALL PHONE
YOU THE MASKED WRESTLER'S AN-
SWER IN AN HOUR, MARGERY"

MARGERY: "GIVE HIM THIS RING, I WILL
KNOW HIM BY IT AT THE RECEPTION"

Back to scene.

She thanks him prettily. He taps bell on desk, valet enters portieres. Margery extends her hand. Louis bows low over it. She exits followed by valet. Louis sinks in chair at desk, looks at invitation, then a smile crosses his face.

SCENE 8. — Interior. Bust *closeup* of Margery at French phone. *Fade in* Margery listening at phone, her face a picture of expectance.

SCENE 9. — Interior. Bust *closeup* of Louis at French phone. Louis talking over phone, he smiles and nods head. *Cut to:*

SUBTITLE 8. LOUIS: "THE MASKED
WRESTLER BEGS TO THANK YOU, MAR-
GERY, AND ACCEPTS WITH PLEAS-
URE YOUR INVITATION"

SCENE 10. — Interior. Margery at phone same as Scene 8. Margery delighted, thanks Louis for his help, hangs up, "Oh, I shall see him again" she registers full into lens.

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SUBTITLE 9. THE NIGHT OF THE BALL. M. LEFEVRE, A SCHEMING ADVENTURER AND SUITOR FOR MARGERY'S HAND

SCENE 11. — Interior. *One-half figure closeup* against heavy portieres and palms.

Discovered: Lefevre in evening dress, red scarf across heart, focused against portieres. He gnaws his mustache nervously as he gazes intently toward salon, slight frown crosses his face, then an ironic smile replaces it as his eyes supposedly follow Margery off scene.

SCENE 12. — Interior. Beautiful French salon, furnished appropriately. A six-step staircase, back center with landing exiting to right and left. Balustrade draped with heavy hangings. Great archway right leading into a conservatory beyond.

Discovered: Fashionable ensemble of men and women, grouped and moving about chatting. Margery with her father, well down to line. She is gowned beautifully. Two fashionable women with their escorts chatting to Margery and her father.

SCENE 13. — Interior. *One-half closeup* against portieres, same as Scene 11. Lefevre arches eyebrows, twirls mustache and, with eyes fixed on Margery off scene, exits.

SCENE 14. — Interior. Salon same as Scene 12. Lefevre comes on from archway right, crosses down stage to group with Margery. He appears gallant and smiling, yet his manner is that of one biding his time. He tries to monopolize Margery's attention. She is not pleased with his attentions. She appears nervous and expectant and her eyes wander con-

The Masked Wrestler

stantly to stairway. Suddenly footman appears on landing and announces. *Cut to:*

SUBTITLE 10. FOOTMAN: "THE MASKED WRESTLER"

Back to scene.

Instantly every eye is focused on landing. Footman steps back. The Masked Wrestler enters in evening dress and wearing mask. A wave of applause greets him. He bows gracefully to all, then saunters down steps. Footman exits. Wrestler comes down to Margery and her father. All watch him intently. Lefevre sneeringly stands aside, scowling. Margery holds out her hand to the Wrestler. He bows low over it and kisses her hand. She introduces him to her father, then Lefevre. Lefevre coldly ignores the Wrestler's hand and merely nods. The Wrestler watches him keenly from behind mask, then chats with Margery. He is center of attraction for entire salon. Lefevre watches scowling, crosses slowly toward archway.

SCENE 15. — Interior. *One-half closeup* against portieres same as Scene 13. Lefevre on, looking off scene at the Wrestler and Margery. Scowls, twists mustache nervously. Glares off scene — "Damn him!" he registers forcibly.

SUBTITLE 11. LATER

SCENE 16. — Interior. *Closeup* corner in conservatory against background of palms. (*Night tint.*)

Discovered: Margery and the Wrestler on rustic seat *tete-a-tete*. Margery sees her ring on his finger. The Wrestler says it is his dearest possession. Mar-

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gery secretly registers her love for masked man of mystery. The Wrestler longs to declare his love, but hesitates.

SCENE 17. — Interior. Another *closeup* against background of palms. Lefevre on, sees Margery and Wrestler off scene, stops, glares, suddenly starts back quickly.

SCENE 18. — Interior. *Closeup* against palms, same as Scene 16. Margery and Wrestler rising. She takes his arm and they exit chatting.

SCENE 19. — Interior. Salon, same as Scene 14. Ensemble moving about. Margery and the Wrestler come on from archway and come down toward line, talking earnestly.

SCENE 20. — Interior. *Closeup* against portieres, same as Scene 15. Lefevre glaring off scene, calls another Frenchman and tells him to bring the Masked Wrestler into the gymnasium.

SCENE 21. — Interior. Salon same as Scene 19. Margery and Wrestler talking at foot of stairway. Frenchman enters, asks Wrestler if he might see him in the gymnasium. Wrestler excuses himself and retires with Frenchman.

SUBTITLE 12. THE INSULT

SCENE 21½. — Interior. Winter's gymnasium. (This set is simple, merely suggesting the gymnasium.) Lefevre and men discovered. Wrestler on with Frenchman. Lefevre insults Wrestler. Wrestler instantly strikes him. The duel starts as scene fades out.

End of Part One

The Masked Wrestler

" THE MASKED WRESTLER "

PART TWO

SUBTITLE 13. THE DUEL

SCENE 22. — Interior. Winters' gymnasium, same as Scene 21½. *Fade in on duel beginning. Short flash.*

SCENE 23. — Interior. Salon, same as Scene 21. *Short flash of Margery and people talking.*

SCENE 24. — Interior. Gymnasium, same as Scene 22. Details are arranged. Wrestler and Lefevre are given the rapiers. Wrestler tests his blade thoroughly while Lefevre sneers. " En garde ! " Both salute, fall into position and the duel is on. This duel should be a masterpiece of brilliant swordsmanship, lightning thrusts, brilliant parries, etc. The footage on this scene should run between one hundred and one hundred and fifty feet, at director's discretion, and can be broken at times by closeup flashes of portions of excited crowd watching. The action of the duel shows the Wrestler always cool and brilliant in his mastery of swordplay. Lefevre is cool to start with, but the Wrestler's superb mastery angers him. He tries to force the action and is wounded slightly in arm. This enrages him, he fails to guard an attack and the Wrestler coolly scratches him over the heart as a warning. The Wrestler is seen merely to be playing with Lefevre. The enraged adventurer now savagely attacks Louis, throwing caution to the winds. The Wrestler easily parries his attack, suddenly assumes the offensive, drives Lefevre before him with a series of lightning thrusts and finally disarms him neatly. Lefevre stands helpless. For a moment

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the Wrestler regards him. Lefevre waits the end with twitching face. The Wrestler coolly tosses his sword aside, then steps up to Lefevre, denounces him dramatically for his insult, slaps him across the face with his open hand and orders him to leave. Lefevre, shaking with rage, glares at him a moment, then turns and rushes out. Crowd breaks into hysterical applause.

SUBTITLE 14. A WEEK PASSES

THE "LION," A FAMOUS ALSATIAN CHAMPION, TRAINS FOR HIS BOUT WITH THE MASKED WRESTLER ON THE FOLLOWING NIGHT

SCENE 25. — Interior. Corner of gymnasium. On a mat the "Lion" is wrestling with his trainer (Gracco-Roman style). About twelve men, a mixture of sports and well-dressed gentlemen, are watching the "Lion" work. The "Lion" is conceited and happy. Louis strolls on, dressed in boulevard walking clothes, silk hat, stick, etc. Shrewdly he sizes up the "Lion's" work, watches his points, studies his weaknesses — one or two gentlemen in crowd greet Louis cordially. Louis acknowledges this with a smile and nod. For a moment he watches work of the "Lion." "Lion" easily toys with his trainer. Crowd applauds. Louis turns toward camera — look of disgust on face — stands thinking of Margery — smile crosses his face. He makes firm decision. With a glance of disgust toward mat he exits quickly.

SCENE 26. — Interior. Louis' den, same as Scene 7. Louis on through portieres, valet following. Valet takes his hat and stick and exits. Louis comes

The Masked Wrestler

down to desk and sits in chair. His mind is made up on a certain point — takes pen and paper, starts to write letter. *Fade out slowly.*

SCENE 27. — Interior. Margery's dressing table, same as Scene 6. *Fade in slowly.* Margery at dressing table. Maid on with letter. Margery reads. *Cut to:*

Closeup flash of letter in bold male hand.

— AND I AM GROWING WEARY OF THE GAME. MY BOUT WITH THE "LION" TOMORROW NIGHT WILL BE MY LAST, AND, IF I MAY BUT HAVE PERMISSION, I WILL UNMASK AND REVEAL MYSELF TO YOU IN THE ARENA. THE MASKED WRESTLER

Back to scene.

Margery slowly drops letter. Her surprise and joy are boundless. "Oh, he will unmask to me," she breathes. For a moment she sighs happily, gazing full into lens, then slowly she turns to dressing table and picks up phone as scene *slowly fades out.*

SUBTITLE 15. THE DAY OF THE GREAT MATCH

SCENE 28. — Interior. Corner of gymnasium same as Scene 25. Half dozen sports and gentlemen standing discussing coming match. The "Lion" on, dressed for street. They crowd around him excitedly. He affects air of bravado. Lefevre in silk hat and carrying cane, sees "Lion," notes his bravado, gets idea, smiles shrewdly. "Lion" turns from crowd. Lefevre addresses him cleverly. "Lion" notes his good clothes and bearing. Is flattered. Lefevre

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shrewdly asks him to step into private room and discuss something. "Lion" hesitates, then agrees. Lefevre, with look of triumph, takes him by the arm. They exit.

SCENE 29. — Interior. *Closeup* corner in private room. Corner backing with table and two chairs. Lefevre on with "Lion," they sit at table. Lefevre shrewdly talks of match and mentions Masked Wrestler. Instantly "Lion" scowls savagely, bangs table. They exit.

SUBTITLE 16. THE "LION": "THE MASKED
WRESTLER? CURSE HIM! HIS MASK
IS AN INSULT TO EVERY PROFES-
SIONAL HE MEETS IN THE
ARENA"

Back to scene.

Lefevre secretly gloats over the "Lion's" anger. Coolly and carefully he proposes that the "Lion" unmask the Masked Wrestler in the arena that night. "Lion" hesitates. Lefevre takes out purse, taps it significantly and urges him shrewdly. "Lion" finally agrees. Lefevre makes sure they are alone, then launches into the plan. "Lion" listens with grim smile.

SUBTITLE 17. THAT NIGHT

SCENE 30. — Interior. Dressing room. Wrestler with mask on. Second puts on his cloak. For a moment the Wrestler gazes at Margery's ring on his hand, then silently grips second's hand. Second earnestly wishes him good luck. Wrestler nods, then hurries out through portieres.

SCENE 31. — Interior. Door of dressing-room,

The Masked Wrestler

three-quarter closeup. The "Lion" comes out of dressing-room in wrestling costume and wearing bath-robe. Several men crowd around him excitedly. Lefevre on in evening dress, sees "Lion," shrewdly takes note from pocket. "Lion" sees him, crosses to him, men exit talking. Lefevre slyly gives him note, wrings his hand with hasty "Don't fail me!" and saunters off coolly. The "Lion" reads note.
Cut to:

Closeup flash of note in man's hand.

REMEMBER THE BARGAIN, 10,000 FRANCS
FOR HIS UNMASKING. L

Back to scene.

"Lion" looks up from note with grim face. Registers he will unmask the Masked Wrestler. Several men hurry on and up to the "Lion." He turns to them quickly, *hastily trying to crumple note into pocket of bath-robe—it falls to floor unnoticed.* "Lion" exits with admirers. Margery, in stunning evening gown, and her father in full dress, on. Margery drops her bag, stoops to pick it up and finds note. Curious, she reads it. *Closeup flash* of note same as above.

Back to scene.

She is astonished. Then the plot dawns on her. "Lefevre!" she registers. Quickly she shows note to father, rapidly explains its meaning. "It's a plot to unmask him!" she cries. Father amazed. Suddenly she has idea. Quickly puts note in bag and hurries off with father.

SCENE 32. — Interior. Arena *closeup* at Lefevre's box. Lefevre enters box and takes seat. He smiles

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grimly and twists mustache as he looks around coolly at crowd.

SCENE 33. — Interior. French foreground. View of arena, same as Scene 1. The "Lion" enters in bath-robe, is greeted with applause. He bows.

SCENE 34. — Interior. Arena *closeup* at Winters' box, same as Scene 4. Margery and father in box. Margery's eyes fixed intently on arena, her hands nervously twisting Lefevre's note.

SUBTITLE 18. "L'HOMME MASQUE!"

SCENE 35. — Interior. View of arena, same as Scene 33. "Lion" standing in wrestling togs. Masked Wrestler on in long cloak. Great applause. Masked Wrestler bows gracefully, then with quick movement he throws cloak to an attendant, who exits. Louis stands in wrestling costume. Crowd applauds wildly. "Lion" sizes Louis up keenly.

SCENE 36. — Interior. *Closeup* at Winters' box, same as Scene 34. Margery excitedly leans out over box, crumples note in a ball and tosses it into arena.

SCENE 37. — Interior. Arena, same as Scene 35. Masked Wrestler bowing to crowd, note drops at his feet. He picks it up, reads. *Cut to:*

Flash Lefevre's note, at bottom of which is written in feminine hand:

"FOUND THIS NEAR DRESSING ROOMS.
THINK LEFEVRE HAS PLOTTED WITH THE
"LION" TO UNMASK YOU. BEWARE!
"MARGERY."

Back to scene.

Masked Wrestler astonished, turns toward "Lion," regards him fixedly a moment. "Lion" scowls an-

The Masked Wrestler

grily. Masked Wrestler turns, raises eyes to Winters' box and throws Margery a kiss.

SCENE 38. — Interior. Winters' box, same as Scene 36. Margery throws the Masked Wrestler a kiss excitedly. She has saved him. She turns to father. "Isn't he wonderful, father?" she breathes. Father pats her hand tenderly.

SCENE 39. — Interior. Lefevre's box, same as Scene 32. Lefevre glaring intently into arena, gnawing mustache nervously.

SUBTITLE 19. THE GREAT MATCH

SCENE 40. — Interior. The arena, same as Scene 37. The Masked Wrestler and "Lion" circle around each other seeking a hold. "Lion" tries the neck, but the Masked Wrestler shakes him off easily. Suddenly "Lion" slips behind Louis, seizes him about waist. Masked Wrestler grabs his arms, shoves them down, and both fall to mat. "Lion" seizes his neck to turn him over, but as he starts to straddle, the Masked Wrestler rises to knees, reaches back, seizes "Lion" about neck and throws him clean over head. Quickly Louis is on him, but "Lion" bridges cleverly and with mighty effort turns and comes to his feet.

SCENE 41. — Interior. Winters' box, same as Scene 38. Margery and father excitedly watching match. Margery with hands clasped, eyes fastened on Louis in arena.

SCENE 42. — Interior. Lefevre's box, same as Scene 39. Lefevre glaring intently into arena, shrewd smile crosses his face.

SCENE 43. — Interior. Arena, same as Scene 40. Louis and "Lion" circling around each other. They

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lock. Louis with grim smile glares into "Lion's" face.

SCENE 44. — Interior. *One-half closeup* in arena. "Lion" and Masked Wrestler locked. Masked Wrestler glaring into "Lion's" face. His lips move. *Cut to:*

SUBTITLE 20. MASKED WRESTLER: "RE-MEMBER LEFEVRE'S BARGAIN. TEN THOUSAND FRANCS FOR MY UNMASKING!"

Back to scene.

"Lion" starts in fear, glares wildly at Louis, his face and hands working nervously. He knows he is trapped.

SCENE 45. — Interior. Arena, same as Scene 43. The Masked Wrestler throws "Lion" off easily. "Lion" glares at him like trapped animal. Suddenly he springs, seizes Masked Wrestler's right hand, turns and starts to throw him over head. Masked Wrestler quickly seizes "Lion" by neck and both fall to mat. Now begins a fearful struggle. "Lion" realizes he is trapped, struggles like a demon — all around arena they battle, employing all holds known to Graeco-Roman wrestling. Finally they go to mat, Masked Wrestler on top. "Lion" fights way to hands and, with quick movement, reaches up to seize Masked Wrestler's mask. He sees the move and grabs "Lion's" hand and jerks him quickly to feet. Like lightning the Masked Wrestler seizes him about waist and, evading "Lion's" clawing hands, lifts him bodily from ground and dashes him head-first to the arena. "Lion" strikes on head and shoulders

The Masked Wrestler

and lies motionless. Great applause. The Masked Wrestler is showered with flowers. Two attendants hurry on, pick up "Lion" and carry him out. The Masked Wrestler bows his thanks to crowd.

SCENE 46. — Interior. Lefevre's box, same as Scene 42. Lefevre on feet, glaring into arena. He is beaten.

SCENE 47. — Interior. Winters' box, same as Scene 41. Margery and father on feet. Margery applauding excitedly. She throws Masked Wrestler a kiss.

SCENE 48. — Interior. Arena, same as Scene 45. The Masked Wrestler looks toward Winters' box. Gracefully he throws Margery a kiss. Takes note from belt, turns, glares toward Lefevre's box, then crosses out of scene.

SCENE 49. — Interior. Lefevre's box, same as Scene 46. Lefevre starts back in surprise and fear as the Masked Wrestler strides on.

SUBTITLE 21. THE REVELATION

SCENE 50. — Interior. Arena, same as Scene 45. Wrestler walks to center of arena, faces box and takes off mask.

SCENE 51. — Interior. Winters' box, same as Scene 47. Margery and father surprised. Louis enters room, up to box, presents Margery with ring, saying:

SUBTITLE 22. LOUIS: "THE RING WAS
FOR THE MASKED WRESTLER. I'M
ONLY LOUIS DE LUZON"

Back to scene—fade out.

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SUBTITLE 23. LOUIS: "I HAVE WRESTLED
MY LAST MATCH, MADEMOISELLE.
THE MASKED WRESTLER HAS
PASSED ON"

SCENE 52. — Interior. Rustic seat in conservatory, against background of palms, same as Scene 18. *Closeup*, night tint. Pretty light effect on rustic seat. Louis on with Margery. She has mask in hand. He seats her. Slowly she looks up from mask in her lap. He gazes into her eyes tenderly. She replaces ring on his finger. In a shy little manner she slowly raises mask, presses it to her lips, then looks away, abashed at her own boldness. With a cry Louis catches her in his arms, pleads his great love. "Margery, you have been my inspiration, the one girl in all the world I love. Dearest, will you be my wife?" Slowly her eyes seek his, then her hands steal up about his neck. "I love you, too, my hero," she whispers. Then he kisses her tenderly, crushes her in his arms and the scene *slowly fades out*.

THE END.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE MELODRAMA

EDWARD T. LOWE, JR., is one of the most prolific scenario writers in the business. He is on the staff at the Essanay Film Company, and has turned out some good examples of the melodrama.

I am indebted to him for a specimen script of one of his melodramas which has been produced by the Essanay Film Company. The story was put on the screen exactly as it was written by Mr. Lowe.

It may seem elaborate to the beginner and difficult to understand. But since the silent drama has taken its place with the spoken drama and the two have met on an equal footing, it is almost as much an art to write a photoplay as a plot for the stage.

I want you to take this play and study it carefully and see how Mr. Lowe has evolved his characters and made his plot acceptable in the eyes of the director.

He has made every part of his script so clear that the director could not fail to grasp the idea advanced in the story in its entirety.

How to Write for the "Movies"

SYNOPSIS

"LET NO MAN ESCAPE"

By Edward T. Lowe, Jr.

A story based on the motto of the modern efficient police department, "Let No Man Escape," and through which there is interwoven a man's faith in God, the Omnipotent, and the strength in his own convictions of his innocence.

The story opens with a murder having been committed. This is carefully veiled in such a way that no Censor Board trouble will be experienced.

John Brannon, through a chain of evidence woven against him by Gordon Thorne, the real murderer, thinks he is the murderer. But somehow there is a something in his heart that tells him he is not. He realizes, however, that the proof is against him and takes Thorne's advice to clear out. He does so, taking with him his little daughter.

Thorne, meanwhile, goes to his home, where, safe in the assurance that Brannon would be accused of the crime, he spends the night. But he reckoned without being sure. The man they thought dead was not. With just enough life left to drag himself to the table, he wrote a message, "Thorne did the shooting. Brannon is innocent." This is found next morning by a servant and the detectives are summoned.

Gunther, the detective, immediately starts for Thorne's home, but he becomes aware of his presence and makes a getaway. Gunther vows to track him down.

Meanwhile Brannon has gone far from the haunts

The Melodrama

of men and is living in the solitude of the wilderness. We now see him, four years after the first occurrence. In a vision he sees an angel and the words, "Go thou forth and mingle amongst thy fellowmen. Justify thyself in thy own sight." Feeling in his heart that he is an innocent man, he decides to face the world again, and fifteen years later we see him a successful man in the small town of Maysville, where he is being put in the race for mayor.

Meanwhile Gunther, the detective, happens on the trail of Thorne, who is again operating his confidence game, and starts out after him. He traces him to Maysville.

During this time that Gunther is traveling the one thousand miles to Maysville, Thorne, the crook, has succeeded in putting into operation his swindle, "The Alaskan Gold Dredging Co." Albert Wright, the sweetheart of Brannon's daughter, falls a prey, and through him, Brannon, living under the assumed name of Warren, becomes cognizant of Thorne's presence.

He goes to Thorne and demands that the swindle be stopped. They, of course, recognize each other, and Thorne threatens Brannon that unless he keeps his hands out of the pie, that on election day he will tell the people the kind of a man they are electing for Mayor. Brannon, in spite of this, openly defies Thorne, and puts his faith in a passage from the Bible, "In thee, O Lord, do I put my trust. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart." This is used in the story.

The day of the election speech comes and Brannon, on the platform, is making his plea for office. Thorne,

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true to his word, openly denounces him as a murderer and for a moment it looks bad for Brannon. But they reckoned without Gunther. He appears, grapples with Thorne and then in a short speech tells the crowd of the real facts surrounding the case, showing as proof the letter from the murdered man. They again sway in favor of Brannon.

As Gunther turns to congratulate Brannon, Thorne makes a dash for liberty, succeeding in getting into a buggy. He is chased in an auto by Gunther and in a sensational scene, clambers from the hood into the swiftly moving buggy. He handcuffs Thorne and the supposition is that he is taken to justice.

Later, we see him with Thorne on a train, while in Brannon's home we see a scene which shows a great faith in God, the words, "If thou shalt harken unto the voice of the Lord, to keep his commandments, and if thou turn unto the Lord thy God with all thine heart, then the Lord thy God will turn thy captivity and have compassion upon thee," which have been Brannon's faith, appear in the scene. Brannon returns thanks to his God for His infinite goodness.

The termination is the slight thread of love which has run through the latter part of the story between Carolyn, Brannon's daughter, and Albert, her sweetheart.

Characters

Brannon — First, a young man of about twenty-five.

Presumably a widower, as his wife is never seen.

If director thinks best, wife can be introduced, but

I wouldn't advise it. Brannon is accused of a

The Melodrama

crime of which he feels he is innocent. He realizes the futility of trying to clear himself, and goes into solitude. Gradually the man changes, his study of the Bible making stronger than ever his belief that he is innocent. His faith in God is unlimited. He is a loving father, and fifteen years later is a successful man, under an assumed name. Later, his honor will not allow him to let the villain swindle the people, and at the risk of "going back," (as he thinks) and losing the honorable position to which he has risen, he makes a sacrifice of himself. He is saved just in time.

Thorne — the heavy. An unprincipled man. He is the real murderer. He shifts the blame to Brannon's shoulders. Later he finds out that the police know who the real murderer was. He makes good his escape. Eventually he is brought to justice. A typical heavy.

Gunther — the detective. A man with a will. His mind once set is hard to change. He swears to bring Thorne to justice. He does. This is a good part.

Miscellaneous

The murdered man — which requires some careful work. About forty. Well dressed.

A policeman.

A servant girl — house cleaner, towel on head, etc.

Second policeman, third policeman.

A chauffeur for taxi.

Carolyn — Brannon's daughter.

1st. A child of three years.

2nd. A little girl of seven years.

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3rd. A pretty girl of eighteen. Sweet, modest, loves her father, has a sweetheart. A minor part. Necessary to the thread of love through last reel.

An angel — for vision scene.

A large crowd for election scenes. Different types. Mostly typical small-town dress. Not rubes, just one or two that suggest rubes.

Chief of detectives.

Albert Wright — Carolyn's sweetheart. A young chap of about twenty. Rather neat small-town dress.

A lounge about railroad station.

Chauffeur.

SCENE PLOT

<i>Ext. Int.</i>	<i>Scene</i>	<i>Scenes</i>
x	Brannon's library	1, 4, 6, 8
x	Entrance to apartment	2
x	Brannon's bedroom, simple set	3, 5
x	Brannon's nursery, simple set	7, 9
x	Brannon's hallway, simple set	10, 14
x	Closeup at table, in library	11
x	Extra closeup, showing hand	12, 18
x	Inside passenger coach, closeup	13, 24, 58, 63
x	Closeup in Brannon's library	15, 17, 19
x	Handsomely furnished bedroom	16, 20, 23, 27

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x	Scene from second or third floor of building	21
x	Entrance to house	22
x	Rear porch of apart- ment house	25
x	Closeup at door, simple set	26
x	An alleyway	28, 30
x	Street, with intersection of alley	29, 31
x	A railroad station	32, 53
x	A log cabin in distant woods	33
x	Closeup at bench in front of cabin	34
x	Gunther's desk, simple set	35, 37, 44, 48
x	Closeup on Gunther's desk	36
x	Interior of the log cabin room	38, 40
x	Simple corner set in log cabin	39
x	Speaking stand, at night, simple interior set	41
x	A railroad station	42, 67
x	Detective bureau, simple set	43, 45, 47, 49
x	Closeup, scrap book	46
x	A nice living-room	50, 55, 57, 65, 66, 88
x	A small country home, in small town	51

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x	Business building in small town	52, 54, 59, 74
x	Closeup, hand holding bond	56
x	Closeup, Thorne's desk, simple set	60, 62, 64
x	Small town, street scene	61
x	Speakers' stand	68
x	Benches around platform	69, 70
x	Closeup on platform	71, 73, 75, 79, 81, 83
x	Closeup of Thorne	72, 77
x	French foreground on large crowd	76, 80, 82
x	Large view of platform crowd, etc., etc.	78, 85
x	Hitching place, near stand	84
x	Long stretch of road	86

Quite a number of interior sets, the majority of which are very simple, however.

SCENARIO

"LET NO MAN ESCAPE"

PART ONE

SCENE 1. — Interior. A nicely furnished room, supposedly in Brannon's home.

Discovered: On the table to the right and across which Brannon is lying in a stupor, is seen seltzer bottle, decanter, and highball glasses. Down stage center is standing Thorne, holding in his hand a revolver and in a position as if he has drawn back after having just fired it. On left and just protrud-

The Melodrama

ing into the aperture is seen a man's feet. This is all. For a moment Thorne stands as if waiting for some sign of life from the man on left (whose body is not seen), and then, with a cautious manner, goes slowly to edge of aperture and kneels down, his hand going out as if to feel the heart of the dead man. Slowly he turns his face to the camera and articulates "Dead!" — slowly rising as he does so and looking with immutable countenance at the revolver. His eyes slowly travel to the form of Brannon upon the table. A curious glint comes into his eyes and slowly going to Brannon, opens his clenched hand and places the revolver in it. Brannon stirs. Thorne sits down and calmly lights a cigar. In a moment Brannon again stirs and in a dazed manner sits upright. His eyes travel to the revolver and then slowly around the room, falling upon the man's feet on left. With a startled exclamation upon his lips, he springs to his feet, sobered, and sees Thorne. For a moment he stands still, and then a realization of what he thinks has happened coming over him, he slowly registers, "Did I do that?" — pointing to himself as he does so and then to the body. Thorne, slowly turning to him, nods his head in silent assent. For a moment Brannon looks at the revolver, registering his dazed mind, and then of a sudden, goes into a blue funk, throwing himself across the table and burying his head in his arms. Thorne's face registers the success of his plan, and with careful cunning upon his face, rises, crosses behind Brannon, and putting his hand upon his shoulder, leans forward and registers carefully worded sentences. As he does so, Brannon raises, listens, and as he understands, rises quickly,

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a changed man in manner. He turns with an appreciative manner to Thorne and registers his intention of doing as he suggested. Immediately the tenor of the scene is changed. Excitement gives way to quick and careful manner as Thorne registers, "Get ready and get away" — "I'm going now," and suiting his action to his words, leaves the room, a smile of cunning passing from his face toward Brannon. *Off*, as Brannon, with averted eyes, crosses to exit on right.

SCENE 2. — Exterior. Night. Blue tint. Entrance to an apartment house.

Discovered: Thorne comes from the door in non-chalant manner. Calmly stops, lights his cigar with a match which he obtains from a passing policeman and then with a cheerful "goodnight," slaps the minion of the law upon the back, handing him a cigar as he exits scene. *Off*, as the policeman looks at the cigar and then with a salute toward Thorne's exit, places it in his pocket and, with a pleased manner, exits off scene.

SCENE 3. — Interior. A simple set, showing the corner of a room, supposedly in Brannon's home.

Discovered: Brannon enters the room. Stands for a moment dazed, and then rushes off scene. Back again in a moment with a suitcase, which he throws open and frantically opening the drawers of the bureau, commences to take clothes out.

SCENE 4. — Interior. Brannon's library or living room. Same as Scene 1.

Discovered: The man's feet still in same position. About five feet of this and then the feet move. The camera slowly pans, showing his body. His arm moves slightly and his head turns.

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SCENE 5. — Interior. Corner of Brannon's bedroom. Same as Scene 3.

Brannon puts the last article of clothing in his suitcase, then shutting it and strapping it, picks it up and walks from scene.

SCENE 6. — Interior. Brannon's library or living-room. Same as Scenes 1, 4.

Discovered: The camera in position as at the end of Scene 4. The man, with an effort slowly rises and commences to crawl toward the table, the camera panning on him as he does so.

SCENE 7. — Interior. Night. Blue tint. Supposedly nursery in Brannon's home. On left is window through which the moonlight is coming in a brilliant stream. In the little iron bed by the window is seen a child's form. Simple set.

Discovered: Brannon enters the scene, his face coming full into the light as he leans over the little girl's bed and looks tenderly at her. His face registers the mental strain which he is undergoing as he lifts her from her crib and she slowly awakes, throwing her arms about her daddy. *Off*, as he sits her on the edge of the bed and commences to make preparations to dress her.

SCENE 8. — Interior. Brannon's library or living room. Same as Scenes 1, 4, 6.

Discovered: The man has now reached the table, and is, with a supreme effort, raising himself to the chair. He succeeds, but fainting, falls limply across table.

SCENE 9. — Interior. Night. Blue tint. Nursery in Brannon's home. Same as Scene 7.

Discovered: Brannon now has his little girl, Caro-

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lyn, dressed. *Off*, as he picks her up in his arms and exits scene, she sleepily falling across his shoulder.

SCENE 10. — Interior. A simple set. Hallway in Brannon's home. Showing simply curtained doorway on left.

Discovered: Brannon enters the scene with the sleeping child in his arms. He carries the suitcase. He turns with averted gaze as he passes the doorway registering that in there is *the thing*. *Off*, as he exits scene.

SCENE 11. — Interior. *Closeup* in Brannon's library on table.

Discovered: The man lying across table in position as at end of Scene 8. In a moment he raises himself with an effort and his hand takes a pen from the table. *Off*, as he commences to write.

SCENE 12. — Interior. *Extra closeup* on table in library. Showing hand, writing.

Discovered: The hand writing the following words:

GORDON THORNE DID IT. BRANNON IS INNOCENT.

HAYWOOD

Off, as the signature is penned in a weakening manner, and the hand loses its hold, and slowly relaxing as the pen drops.

SCENE 13. — Interior. Night. Blue tint. Scene made in passenger coach *closeup* on Brannon and child at seat.

Discovered: Brannon, his face an immovable mask of emotions, sitting looking out the window. He turns slowly to the little daughter, who is curled up on the

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seat beside him. *Off*, as the tears well up in his eyes and he turns away. *Fade scene out.*

SUBTITLE 1. MORNING — THE DISCOVERY

SCENE 14. — Interior. Hallway in Brannon's home. Same as Scene 10.

Discovered: The servant, her head wrapped up in towel, enters the scene with carpet-sweeper in her hand. She enters the room through the curtained doorway.

SCENE 15. — Interior. *Closeup* view in Brannon's library.

Discovered: The table (only a part of it) seen on left edge of aperture. On the right the curtained doorway. The maid enters with the sweeper. Her eye catches the form of the dead man. Transfixed, she stands for a moment, and then with a scream, turns and rushes from the room.

SCENE 16. — Interior. A bedroom, handsomely furnished.

Discovered: Thorne sitting on edge of bed, his hair tousled. He has on his bath or lounging robe. With a yawn, he raises his hand above his head and stretches. *Off*, as he rises, slipping his feet into his slippers.

SUBTITLE 2. A LITTLE LATER

SCENE 17. — Interior. View in Brannon's library. Same as Scene 15.

Discovered: Gunther, the detective, enters the room, followed by the servant and policemen, two in number. The detective motions the policemen to stand at doorway. He then looks toward where the

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corpse would be (only the hand of which is visible), and bites his lips. Walks to edge of aperture and leans over the table. His hand goes out of aperture.

SCENE 18. — Interior. *Extra closeup* on table in library. Same as Scene 12.

Discovered: The detective's hand enters aperture, lift's dead man's hand from sheet of paper, picking up the paper.

SCENE 19. — Interior. View in Brannon's library. Same as Scenes 15, 17.

Discovered: Gunther's hand coming into view again, holding the piece of paper. He reads — (Optional to *flash closeup* of his hands holding letter) — places the paper in his pocket and with a word to first policeman, registers he is to remain. First policeman nods assent, and Gunther, with a word to the servant (who meanwhile has rather hysterically witnessed the scene) exits the room with second policeman. *Off*, as first policeman draws up chair and with a reassuring word to the servants, sits down.

SCENE 20. — Interior. A bedroom. Handsomely furnished. Same as Scene 16.

Discovered: Thorne is standing at the bureau, near the bed and on right of window, adjusting his tie. He steps to the window to open it and breathes for a moment the fresh air. He leans and suddenly draws back as he sees.

SCENE 21. — Exterior view of action on sidewalk, made from second or third floor of house.

Discovered: View from above. Gunther and second policeman are seen on sidewalk.

SCENE 22. — Exterior. Street scene. Entrance to apartment.

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Discovered: Gunther registering to the policeman that he is to remain outside, while he, Gunther, enters after Thorne, etc. *Off*, as Gunther starts toward door.

SCENE 23. — Interior. A bedroom. Handsomely furnished. Same as Scenes 16, 20.

Discovered: Thorne, calmly planning. He knows they are after him. How they connect him with this crime he does not know, but does know that he must make a getaway. With quick thought he suddenly makes up his mind, and grabbing his hat, exits the room, first locking the door. *Off*, as he exits.

SCENE 24. — Interior of railroad coach. *Closeup* on Brannon. Same as Scene 13. *Short flash* of Brannon, holding little Carolyn upon his knee. He is staring vacantly out of the window.

SCENE 25. — Exterior. Rear porch of apartment house, showing the customary winding steps.

Discovered: Thorne comes from direction of camera, looking back. With slightly excited manner he exits scene, going down steps.

SCENE 26. — Interior. Simple set. *Closeup* at door, supposedly entrance to Thorne's room.

Discovered: Gunther knocks. Waits. Knocks again. Still no answer. He decides to force an entrance, and throws himself forcibly against Thorne's door.

SCENE 27. — Interior. A bedroom. Handsomely furnished. Same as Scenes 16, 20, 23.

Discovered: The door bursts open. *Off*, as Gunther dashes through, looking excitedly for Thorne.

SCENE 28. — Exterior. An alleyway. Showing at end, street.

Discovered: Thorne enters from side, looks back

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and then ducking to hide from view, runs carefully along the fence for a few feet.

SCENE 29. — Exterior. Street scene, showing part of alley at intersection with street.

Discovered: Thorne enters from alley. Hails a taxi which is seen approaching, and giving instructions to driver, enters cab and is driven out of scene.

SUBTITLE 3. THE TRAIL LOST

SCENE 30. — Exterior. An alleyway. Same as Scene 28.

Discovered: Gunther enters the scene. Looks first to right, then to left. Registers vexation. *Off*, as he decides to go in direction of alley.

SCENE 31. — Exterior. Street, showing intersection with alley. Same as Scene 29.

Discovered: Gunther comes into scene from alley. Looks in both directions. Registers that he is baffled. *Off*, as in his vexation he registers he *will* get him, even if it takes his lifetime to do it.

SUBTITLE 4. MEANWHILE

SCENE 32. — Exterior. Platform of a railroad station. Train just pulling out.

Discovered: Thorne enters the scene. Stands in position, and, as the last coach passes him, swings on it. *Off*, as he disappears from view and train passes into the distance.

SUBTITLE 5. A MONTH PASSES. FAR FROM THE HAUNTS OF MEN

SCENE 33. — Exterior. A log cabin in the woods.

Discovered: Brannon, now with a month's beard upon his face is hardly recognizable. In the rough

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clothes in which he is dressed, his disguise is almost perfect. He is seen coming from the house, with little Carolyn in arms. Sitting down on the bench in front of the house, he holds her to him, while with the other hand he opens the Bible and reads.

SCENE 34. — Exterior. *Closeup* at bench in front of cabin.

- Discovered: Brannon, his face registering a silent appeal to his God, is reading the Bible. Little Carolyn slips from his arms and to the ground. Brannon does not notice her, but leaning forward, reads the Bible, his lips moving as he reads.

Dissolve in on scene the following passage from the Bible:

SUBTITLE 5 ½. "IF THOU SHALT HARKEN
UNTO THE VOICE OF THE LORD, TO
KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS, AND IF
YOU TURN UNTO THE LORD THY GOD
WITH ALL THINE HEART, THEN THE
LORD THY GOD WILL TURN THY CAP-
TIVITY AND HAVE COMPASSION UPON
THEE "

Dissolve out and back into scene.

With a look toward heaven and a prayer upon his lips, Brannon falls to the ground and buries his face in his arms in prayer. *Off*, as little Carolyn enters the scene, and seeing her daddy crying, puts her arms about him. The scene *fades*.

SUBTITLE 6. IF HE HAD BUT KNOWN

SCENE 35. — Interior. A *closeup* scene on a large flat-top desk. Supposedly Gunther's, the detective's, office.

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Discovered: Gunther, a puzzled expression upon his face, and smoking a cigar, looking intently upon the scrap book, which lays open upon the desk. *Off*, as he puts his hand on book and with his finger follows the passage he is reading.

SCENE 36. — Interior. *Closeup*, jam down on top of desk, showing one page of scrap book. The page is labelled at the top, "*Thorne Murder.*" Pasted below this heading is seen the following newspaper item:

A MYSTERY

Brannon
(picture)

Thorne
(picture)

Another unsolved problem. Why did John Brannon leave his home, when the message left by the man Thorne murdered, cleared him of all guilt?

SCENE 37. — Interior. *Closeup* at Gunther's desk. Same as Scene 35. Gunther, with a puzzled shake of his head, closes the book, leaning across the table. He again opens the book and his face, changing to an expression of determination, forcibly registers as he takes his cigar from his mouth.

SUBTITLE 7. "I'LL GET THORNE, EVEN
IF IT TAKES A LIFETIME!"

Back to scene.

Gunther brings his fist down upon the table and the scene is *off* as he jams the cigar in his mouth and chews on it determinedly.

END OF PART ONE

The Melodrama

SCENARIO

"LET NO MAN ESCAPE"

PART TWO

SUBTITLE 8. — FOUR YEARS HAVE PASSED

SCENE 38. — Interior. Supposedly of Brannon's log cabin.

Discovered: Little Carolyn, now a child of seven years, is kissing her daddy good night. *Off*, as he takes her in his arms and exits.

SCENE 39. — Interior. Another room of cabin. Simple set. Showing corner of room, with rudely constructed bed.

Discovered: Brannon enters the room. Places Carolyn in her bed, and with another good night kiss, tucks the cover around her and exits the room with the candle, the scene darkening as he exits.

SCENE 40. — Interior. Room in Brannon's cabin. Same as Scene 38.

Discovered: Brannon enters the room, sits again at table, and, opening his Bible, commences to read. As he bows his head over the book, the shadowy form of an angel is seen to dissolve in. As the shadowy shape appears, Brannon raises his eyes, and, as the following words dissolve in above him a smile of happiness comes over his face:

SUBTITLE (*dissolved in on scene*). "GO THOU FORTH. MINGLE AMONGST THY FELLOW-MEN AND JUSTIFY THYSELF IN THY OWN SIGHT"

As the words and angel both dissolve from sight, Brannon rises, his face a transfiguration as he takes

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the Bible, and with face turned toward heaven, breathes a prayer of thanks. The scene fades as he sinks into the chair, and with the book pressed close to his lips, falls slowly forward across the table, his shoulders shaking in sobs.

SUBTITLE 9. ELEVEN YEARS LATER

Firm in his belief that he is an innocent man, Brannon, under the assumed name of Warren, is now a successful man.

SCENE 41. — Exterior. Night blue tint. (Interior set.) A speaking stand, about four feet high. At each corner flames the usual gasoline lights. The background is black.

Discovered: On the stand is Warren (Brannon), making a political speech. Scattered among the crowd of men that are listening are one or two holding election signs, "Warren for Mayor." Cheers go up as Warren forcibly registers his intentions, if he is elected, etc., etc. *Off*, as Warren makes a bow as he finishes and exits toward rear of stand, the crowd commencing to disperse.

SUBTITLE 10. A WEEK BEFORE THE ELECTION

SCENE 42. — Exterior. A small railroad station. If name is visible, have sign "Maysville."

Discovered: The train rolls into view, stopping, and from one of the coaches, Thorne, now an older man, steps to the platform. He is materially changed, wearing a beard, goatee, and shows unmistakable signs of prosperity. He looks around him with a pleased air, registering that he thinks this place will be a good one, exits scene.

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SUBTITLE 11. SEVERAL DAYS LATER

SCENE 43. — Interior. A simple set, supposedly in detective bureau. On door, "International Detective Bureau."

Discovered: The chief at his desk, reading a paper. His face puckers in a frown as a passage strikes his eye. He starts to clip it and has just taken it from the rest of the paper, when the door opens, and Gunther, now much older, enters the room. He sits down in the chair beside the chief as the chief hands him the clipping, registering, "Read that." Gunther looks at it, puckers his forehead, and then suddenly springs to his feet and rushes off side. *Off*, as the chief looks after him, puzzled at the man's strange action.

SCENE 44. — A closeup on Gunther's desk. Same as Scenes 35, 37.

Discovered: Gunther rushes into scene from exit of Scene 43, pulls open a drawer of desk, taking from it the scrap book of Scene 36, and quickly exits.

SCENE 45. — Interior. Same as Scene 43.

Discovered: Gunther enters and excitedly putting the book before the chief, opens it, pointing.

SCENE 46. — Interior. Jam down closeup on top of chief's desk, showing scrap book.

Discovered: The notice of Scene 36, together with an advertisement underneath which is printed on newspaper stock. It reads:

INVEST YOUR MONEY

Immense Profits Assured

The Alaskan Gold Dredging Stock is a
paying investment

See me and buy at once

William Jurdon

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As the camera pans down from first notice to this one, Gunther's hand enters aperture and points to it. In a moment his other hand enters aperture, holding the advertisement which the chief tore from the newspaper. *It is identical with the advertisement above, except for the name, which reads, "Jurdon Williams."* Gunther's hand points from one name to the other.

SCENE 47. — Interior. Detective bureau. Same as Scenes 43, 45.

Discovered: Gunther's hand is taken from the scrap book, holding in it the newspaper clipping, which the chief tore from the paper. Gunther rises and, pointing to the scrap book and then at the clipping in his hand, registers:

SUBTITLE 12. "IT'S THORNE'S SAME OLD SCHEME, CHIEF, AND I'M GOING TO GET HIM THIS TIME!"

Back to scene.

Gunther brings his fist down upon the desk as he registers the above spoken subtitle, and taking the scrap book, rushes into his —

SCENE 48. — Interior. Gunther's desk. Same as Scenes 35, 37, 44.

Discovered: Gunther enters. Sits at desk, opens scrap book, tears from it the page of records of the Thorne case, and placing the book back in the drawer, folds the paper (page of book) and, putting it in his pocket, reaches down, takes his suitcase and exits into —

SCENE 49. — Interior detective bureau. Same as Scenes 43, 45, 47.

Discovered: Gunther enters room, registers "I'm

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off, chief!" and, with a handshake, exits the room. The chief turns in his swivel chair, looks for a moment after him, and then again facing camera, registers, "He'll get him."

SUBTITLE 13. A THOUSAND MILES AWAY

SCENE 50. — Interior. A nicely furnished living-room.

Discovered: Carolyn, now a pretty girl of eighteen summers, talking to Albert Wright. He is showing her a roll of bills, and at the same time pointing to the advertisement which he holds in his hand as she is putting on her hat. Joy predominates as they exit the scene.

SCENE 51. — Exterior. A pretty home, supposedly in small town.

Discovered: Albert and Carolyn are coming from house and are down close to camera as Warren (Brannon) enters from camera side. They exchange words of greeting, Warren playfully shaking his finger at the two young people as they exit scene. He looks after them, registers his enthusiasm and passes on into house.

SCENE 52. — Exterior. A business building. Supposedly in small town. In window is hanging sign, "Office of Alaskan Gold Dredging Company."

Discovered: Carolyn and Albert enter scene, Albert pointing to the sign and again displaying the money. *Off*, as the two young people enter the building.

SCENE 53. — Exterior. Platform of railroad station. Same as Scene 32.

Discovered: The train pulling out as Gunther en-

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ters on a run, swings onto train with his suitcase. *Off*, as train continues out of scene.

SCENE 54. — Exterior. Business building. Same as Scene 52.

Discovered: Carolyn and Albert coming from the building, followed by Jurdon (Thorne), who is smiling and otherwise showing his pleasure, etc., as Albert registers his enthusiasm to Carolyn of the *bond* which he holds in his hand. Thorne reiterates Albert's enthusiasm, and as the young people thank him and exit the scene, a short laugh comes from his lips and he slightly shrugs his shoulders. *Off*, as he enters building.

SCENE 55. — Interior. A nicely furnished living-room. Same as Scene 50.

Discovered: Warren seated at table, glancing over a book (which, from its cover and general appearance, seems to be a Bible). In a moment he looks up with a smile and Albert and Carolyn burst into the room, Carolyn excitedly motioning to Albert to show her father his latest investment. Warren registers inquiry, and Albert, taking the bond from his pocket, hands it to Warren, the meanwhile talking to Carolyn. Warren opens the bond.

SCENE 56. — Interior. *Closeup* of Warren's hands holding the bond. The usual stock bond, printed with the title, "Alaskan Gold Dredging Co."

SCENE 57. — Interior. A nicely furnished living-room. Same as Scenes 50, 55.

Discovered: Warren's face changes as he sees the scheme and the one word, "*Thorne!*" escapes from his lips in a tense moment as he sinks into the chair. Albert and Carolyn turn to him, making surprised in-

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quiries. Warren evades their questions, and registering that he would like to have the use of the bond for a few moments, obtains, of course, Albert's consent, and placing the bond in his pocket, exits the room, his face an expression that plainly denotes his troubled state of mind. The young people look after him, unable to understand the change in his manner.

SCENE 58. — Interior. Scene in passenger coach. Same as Scenes 18, 24.

Discovered: Gunther in the seat, his face a deep study, as he is absorbed in the contents of the page of the scrap book, etc., etc.

SCENE 59. — Exterior. A business building in small town. Same as Scenes 52, 54.

Discovered: Warren entering the scene. He sees the sign in the window, and a grim smile comes upon his face which quickly changes to determination as he makes up his mind to act. *Off*, as he enters.

SCENE 60. — Interior. A simple set. A *closeup* of Jurdon's (Thorne's) desk.

Discovered: Jurdon (Thorne) at the desk, a cigar at an angle in his mouth as he gazes with smiling expression at the fake bonds before him. Suddenly he wheels around and a smile comes over his face, as Warren (Brannon) enters the view. Jurdon extends his hand but Warren, ignoring it, sits down opposite him, and taking the bond from his pocket, points to it. With a tense face he leans over and registers, "*You are Thorne!*" Jurdon recoils as if shot, and leaning over looks closely into Warren's face. Slowly recognition comes to him, and as it does, the expression on his face changes to a smile of crafty cunning. He points to Warren and registers, "*And you are Brannon, are*

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you not? —" Warren nods his head and then in a few tense words, registers that his operations must come to a stop. The smile upon Jurdon's face changes to a scowl as he rises and goes to window on left. He looks out — then turns to Warren and, registering words again, points outside.

SCENE 61. — Exterior. A street scene. No large building shown.

Discovered: A boy bearing the usual election sign, leaning against a post. On the sign is seen, "Warren for Mayor."

SCENE 62. — Interior. *Closeup* at Jurdon's desk. Same as Scene 60.

Discovered: A boy bearing the usual election sign, leaning against a post. On the sign is seen, "Warren for Mayor."

SUBTITLE 14. "YOU KEEP QUIET, BRANNON, OR ON THE DAY OF YOUR ELECTION SPEECH I WILL TELL THE PEOPLE THE KIND OF A MAN THEY ARE ELECTING MAYOR!"

Back to scene.

As Jurdon registers this, Warren turns his face full toward the camera, and as Jurdon leans further over and paints in sickening words the scene of the murder, a vision of Scene 1 *dissolves in*, showing Brannon, the gun in his hand, asking "Did I do that?" and Thorne registering "Yes!" The vision fades out as Warren seems to almost weaken. Then, his strength asserting itself, he turns upon Jurdon and bringing his fist down upon the table, rises and openly defies him. Jurdon registers surprise.

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SCENE 63. — Interior. Scene in passenger coach. Same as Scenes 13, 24, 58.

Discovered: Short flash of Gunther. Short business.

SCENE 64. — Interior. *Closeup* at Jurdon's desk. Same as Scenes 60, 62.

Discovered: Jurdon is registering what he will do, and Warren, his face one of determination, again defies him. *Off*, as with a few final words Warren exits, and Jurdon, baffled but determined to do as he said, sits down in his chair, registering cunning planning.

SCENE 65. — Interior. A nicely furnished living-room. Same as Scenes 50, 55, 57.

Discovered: Albert and Carolyn talking as Warren enters. He shows that he is worried and as he hands Albert the bond Carolyn asks what the trouble is. He smiles slightly and tells her she is not to worry about him. As Carolyn and Albert, both puzzled at his actions, leave the room, Warren takes the Bible and opens it. As he reads a smile comes upon face.

SUBTITLE 15. "IN THEE, O LORD, DO I
PUT MY TRUST. MY FLESH AND MY
HEART FAILETH: BUT GOD IS THE
STRENGTH OF MY HEART"

Back to scene.

Strengthened by his great faith in the Book, Warren clasps his hands in prayer. *Off*, as he again lowers his eyes to the book.

SUBTITLE 16. ELECTION DAY

SCENE 66. — Interior. A nicely furnished living-room. Same as Scenes 50, 65.

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Discovered: Warren, dressed in a nice black business suit, rising from his table, just as Albert and Carolyn enter the room. They are very blithe and gay, and Warren rises to meet them. *Off*, as Carolyn kisses him, Albert shakes his hand, etc., and all three exit.

SCENE 67. — Exterior. A small railroad station, "Maysville." Same as Scene 42.

Discovered: The train rolls into the station, and as it stops, Gunther steps from the coach. He accosts a loungee at the station, taking from his pocket the advertisement, and asking in what direction, etc. *Off*, as the loungee directs him and Gunther exits scene.

SCENE 68. — Exterior. French foreground on election stand. Regulation speakers' stand, etc. Signs, "Warren for Mayor," visible, etc.

SCENE 69. — A large crowd of men surrounds the platform as Warren mounts from rear and enters view. A great cheer goes up as he bows.

SCENE 70. — Exterior. Scene in benches that surround platform.

Discovered: Albert and Carolyn well down forward platform. In a moment Jurdon enters the scene and takes a seat near them. *Off*, as he looks intently toward platform.

SCENE 71. — Exterior. *Closeup* on platform. Showing speakers' table.

Discovered: Warren entering into view and making bow. As he raises his eyes he sees Jurdon.

SCENE 72. — *Closeup* of Jurdon sitting on bench.

SCENE 73. — *Exterior closeup* on platform. Same as Scene 71.

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Discovered: *Cut* from Scene 71. A momentary expression flits across Warren's face as he sees Jurdon. Then squaring his jaw, he commences to make his speech.

SCENE 74. — Exterior. Business building. Same as Scenes 52, 69.

Discovered: Gunther thanking citizen, who is just motioning out of scene. *Off*, as Gunther hurriedly exits scene.

SCENE 75. — Exterior. *Closeup* on platform. Same as Scenes 71, 73.

Discovered: *Short flash* of Warren, forcibly talking.

SCENE 76. — Exterior. French foreground on crowd.

Discovered: The crowd, listening attentively among themselves, some few nodding, as if to say, "He's right," etc.

SCENE 77. — Exterior. *Closeup* of Jurdon on bench. Same as Scene 72.

Discovered: Jurdon, a malicious expression upon his face, rising to his feet.

SCENE 78. — Exterior. Large view, taking in platform, listeners and Jurdon.

Discovered: Jurdon, in denouncing manner, raises his hand, points dramatically toward Warren and registers words that cause the crowd to turn with a start toward the platform. Sneers go up and a few threatening mannerisms are turned toward Warren as Jurdon, vehemently denouncing him, tells the crowd that he is a murderer. Just as the crowd makes a threatening move toward the platform to Warren (who meanwhile has been trying to make

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them listen), Gunther enters the scene, grapples Jurdon (who will be referred to as *Thorne*) by the collar, and dramatically holds up his hand toward the crowd. He shakes his head, and asks their permission to talk to them. This gained, he starts toward the platform, still holding Thorne. The crowd is puzzled, as is Warren (now referred to as Brannon). *Off*, as Gunther starts toward platform.

SCENE 79. — Exterior. *Closeup* on platform. Same as Scenes 71, 75.

Discovered: Brannon, his face a puzzle, is looking at Thorne and Gunther, as they enter aperture. Gunther holds up his hand as if commanding silence. Slowly he commences to tell of the true solution of the case. As he does so, Thorne's face registers that he is baffled, and the light of understanding comes to Brannon.

SCENE 80. — Exterior. French foreground on listeners. Same as Scene 76.

Discovered: Short flash of crowd, listening interestedly.

SCENE 81. — Exterior. *Closeup* on platform. Same as Scenes 71, 79.

Discovered: Gunther turns to Thorne, dramatically registering, "*Here is the real murderer,*" at the same time taking the letter (written by the dead man), and tossing it down into the crowd. *Off*, as Gunther extends his hand to Brannon.

SCENE 82. — Exterior. French foreground on listeners. Same as Scenes 76, 80.

Discovered: The letter in the hands of several of the men, who are reading it to the rest. *Off*, as a mighty cheer goes up.

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SCENE 83. — Exterior. *Closeup* on platform. Same as Scenes 71, 81.

Discovered: As Gunther shakes hands with Brannon, Thorne, his face a contortion of rage, suddenly makes a dash away.

SCENE 84. — Exterior. A scene, supposedly near election stand. Several teams (horse and buggy) are seen.

Discovered: Thorne rushes into scene, jumps into buggy and drives frantically off scene as Gunther, hat off, rushes into scene. In a little Ford car nearby is seen a chauffeur. Quick as a flash, Gunther springs in, motioning the driver to follow the buggy. *Off*, as the car exits scene.

SCENE 85. — Exterior. Large view, taking in platform, listeners. Same as Scene 78.

The crowd (of course, Albert and Carolyn are visible), cheering lustily, as Brannon, now a changed man, holds up his hand for silence. His face is a wonder and he commences to speak. *Off*, as another cheer goes up.

SCENE 86. — Exterior. A long stretch of country road.

Discovered: The horse and buggy, frantically driven by Thorne, being followed by the auto (on which is the camera). The auto gradually gains on the horse and buggy, and Gunther, climbing out on the hood, swings himself into the buggy and grapples with Thorne. He obtains mastery of him and as he places the handcuffs on him and clasps them, grabs the reins and brings the buggy to a stop. *Off*, as Thorne registers efforts of useless attempts to free himself.

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SUBTITLE 17. LATER

SCENE 87. — Exterior. Interior of passenger coach. Same as Scenes 13, 63.

Discovered: A short scene. Thorne, seated by Gunther, is brooding sulkily. He is seen to be handcuffed to Gunther. *Off*, as this scene dissolves.

SUBTITLE 18. SAME AS SUBTITLE 15.

Dissolve subtitle into:

SCENE 88. — Interior. A nicely furnished living-room. Same as Scenes 50, 66.

Discovered: Brannon, his face a thankful smile, raising his eyes from the book before him and the subtitle fades. A happy smile breaks over his face as Carolyn and Albert enter. A whispered word to her father, a look from Brannon to Albert and the scene *fades out* as Carolyn gives herself into Albert's arms and Brannon, happy after his fifteen years of exile, puts his hand on the book and gives thanks to the Lord his God.

CHAPTER XXX

THE CENSOR BOARD

TO many people the term National Board of Censorship is a vague term. The "movie" fans know that such a board exists and that a ticket bearing the legend "Passed by the National Board of Censorship" is a requisite part of every perfectly respectable film.

The board had its origin at the time people were crying against the sensational and utterly impossible subjects, that were being given to the public. To satisfy the morals of the public at large, the exhibitors organized this board, whose duty it is to check for "cut-out" any and all objectionable parts of every film submitted to them.

The Censor Board of Chicago assembles and makes a note on a printed slip, just what in their opinion is the status of the film. If it is artistic, has educational value, they mark it excellent; if it contains any objectionable features they order this particular part of the film cut out. If the film is entirely unfit for public exhibition they order it suppressed.

Major M. L. C. Funkhouser is at the head of

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the Chicago Censor Board. He receives his instructions from the mayor and in turn issues orders to the censors.

The National Board of Censorship has no connection with civic affairs, but is maintained by contributions from the manufacturers, who hold that this board gives them valuable service in helping elevate the standard of films.

What concerns the photoplaywright is to keep away from all subjects tabooed by the censors as objectionable. I am giving a list of subjects which you must carefully consider before putting them into a photoplay. "Objectionable to the Censor Board" is one of the most frequent criticisms presented by a scenario editor. He will pass by any photoplay that he fears will not meet with the approval of the Board of Censorship, so that it is up to you to keep away from the disapproval of this august body.

Productions cost so much that no film company will take the chance of producing a film that contains any suggestion of impropriety. The refusal of a permit is too serious a risk to run, especially when there are so many other photoplays that make successful pictures.

The decision rendered by Judge William Fennimore Cooper in the case of *The Birth of a Nation* established a new precedent in motion pictures and

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temporarily gave the film the same right as the written or spoken word.

The city issued a permit allowing the owners of *The Birth of a Nation* to show this production in the city of Chicago. The question of racial prejudice arose and the permit was withdrawn. The case restraining the city from interfering with the showing of this picture was tried, and Judge Cooper gave the complainants an injunction against the city of Chicago.

The film companies felt that this was a signal victory, for without doubt this decision will be the means of preventing the censor boards from being too radical in their judgment and too powerful in their findings.

OBJECTIONABLE SUBJECTS

The Unwritten Law. — The board does not recognize the so-called unwritten law as a justification for the killing of any being.

Crime. — 1. When crime is the obvious purpose of the picture; that is, when the whole story hinges on the perpetrated crime. 2. When the crime is repulsive and shocks the spectator. 3. The shooting in "cold blood" of any people. 4. Any crime that portrays a unique method of execution.

Suicide. — The board will not pass a picture in which there is a suicide or suggestion of suicide,

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with incidents thereto. The purpose of the board is to prevent all suggestions of self-destruction to those who are morbidly inclined.

Burglary. — There is no objection to a burglary scene as long as there is no actual demonstration of the act of burglarizing; for instance, the burglar may be shown entering through an open window, but must not be shown "jimmying" the window. He may be shown with his back to the audience, opening a safe and extracting money or papers, but he must not be shown opening the safe by any means known to the art of burglars. This would come under the head of *method* and with reason would be found objectionable to the board.

Vulgarity. — All vulgarity and suggestion must be avoided. For instance, flirtations with women who are unmistakably ladies of easy virtue. Letters making dates with such women are objectionable. Avoid the underworld.

Lynching. — Lynching is only permissible when the incident transpires in the early days of the far west when the vigilantes were the only means of enforcing order.

Mischief. — The board objects to pictures that will suggest to the mind of the youth acts of mischief, such as mutilation or destruction of property for the purpose of perpetrating a joke on

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someone, or on invalids or cripples or putting in a poor light any class or race of people.

That the censor board has been instrumental in helping give the public better pictures no one denies, but now that pictures have shed their long clothes and are able to stand up alone, too strict censorship seems unnecessary. That pictures have the same freedom as the spoken word or written expression is being asked by all those interested in the advancement of the "movies."

CHAPTER XXXI

PHOTOGRAPHY

THE average photoplaywright finds the expression "dissolve," or double exposure, the most meaningless phrases in the entire motion picture vocabulary. He knows dissolve has something to do with the vision or dream pictures, but just how to express it and just how it all comes about is a deep-dyed mystery.

The actual technical part of arranging dissolves and other bits of photographic picturizations are not exactly essential to the beginner's education, except for the reason that he should be familiar with all that concerns the production of his story.

Lights and shades, all there is to photography, has reached an unbelievable period of progress in these later years of picture development.

Expert camera men are now as essential to the success of the motion picture as the actor or producer.

The Essanay Film Company, in addition to employing a corps of expert camera men, has Harry Zeck in charge of all their photographic force. Mr. Zeck is an inventor and is largely

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responsible for the excellent photography that has marked all the recent Essanay productions. Different-shaped masking discs have been designed by Mr. Zeck for the purpose of presenting in every conceivable shape a dissolve or vision. A dissolve is the gradual appearance or disappearance of a character by means of a double exposure. When there is a series of the same person appearing simultaneously this is done by a number of exposures made at different times to complete the picture.

The double appearance on the screen of Francis Bushman or King Baggott has filled the spectators with wonder and caused thousands of inquiries to the motion picture editor as to how this was accomplished. This double exposure is effected as follows:

One side of the camera is masked and one side exposed. The action is photographed on the exposed side — then the film is rewound and the side that has been exposed, masked, and the masked side exposed. The different action of the same character is then filmed on the reverse. This sounds complicated but it is quite simple.

Only a few months ago the Universal released *The Corsican Brothers*, with King Baggott playing the rôle of both brothers. The same system of masking was undoubtedly used in this picture.

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In photographing a dream of a vision scene, the film has to be marked at the aperture opening in front of the camera, so that when the film is rewound and the second exposure is made on the same film scene, the holes or perforations register in the same place in the aperture. If this is not done the two pictures will not be simultaneous on the screen.

In a scene where a woman has a vision of her dead father, the picture is taken of her from beginning to end, but note is made just where the dead father appears by means of a dial which records the number of feet exposed, at the same time the length of time in feet (one foot to the second) that she saw her dead father. Then the film is rewound. The camera is reloaded, making sure that the marked aperture on the film is in the proper place. The film is turned to the beginning with the lens masked to the place where the vision was recorded in feet. The vision is faded in, the film timed and dissolved out. The lens is masked again and the rest of the scene taken.

Closeups are photographed at close range. They are used as effective means of expressing emotion.

The working line averages six feet or less in width, so that when one sees how small is the place in which the action is photographed, he is aston-

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ished to see the splendid effects of depth the camera man gets.

In the battle of Petersburg in *The Birth of a Nation*, the largest battle scene ever reproduced on the screen, David Griffith takes a scene such a distance away from the camera that his direction was communicated by a system of telephones placed at intervals. He had a number of aides posted at the telephones to carry the directions to the actors.

All this information, while unnecessary as far as writing the script is concerned, will, I think, be found interesting and instructive, and therefore of value to a beginner.

CHAPTER XXXII

THE FICTION RIGHTS TO THE PHOTOPLAY

THE latest argument and newest struggle in the photoplay field is the ardent fight the professional photoplaywrights are making for the rights to the fictionized versions of their photoplays. They are objecting, and rightly too, to having the various publications use their stories without having some remuneration for the same.

Russell Smith, one of the founders of the Photoplay Authors' League, and a well-known playwright, sends me the following argument directed against these publications. He says:

The P. A. L. has inaugurated a friendly campaign in order to try and induce the various publications of story versions of the photoplay to pay the photoplay author for the use of his plot in its fictionized form in their magazines.

As it stands now, only in an occasional instance does the author of the original photoplay ever get credit for the story, and in no case has he ever gotten cash. As a choice we gibe with old Omar, who lilts: "Ay, the cash and let the credit go!" But we would prefer and we deserve both!

The author's brain conceived the story originally.

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He sells, presumably, only a photoplay — not a fiction story — to the manufacturer. In the first place, therefore, where has the manufacturer secured the right to sell or give the plot to any magazine for fictionizing purposes? Of course, some manufacturers may cover that point in their release slips, which the author signs. In any event, the entire transaction is utterly unfair to the author.

Both the publications above referred to and the manufacturers are thus placing themselves in the same category as the man who would take any magazine story and from that plot construct a play and sell it or produce it without compensation to the original author. The story is the same, only in another form. Thus it is with fictionized photoplay.

The plot is conceived by one author, produced by a manufacturer who pays for the privilege, and fictionized by another sort of publisher, who does not pay for the privilege — at least he doesn't pay the author of that plot. He has to pay another author to fictionize it.

There are steps afoot to promote an amicable settlement of this difficulty, and since it would mean loss of cash to the magazines concerned there will probably be more or less of a fight. More power to our elbow, boy and girl photoplaywrights! We do not ask much, and by the same token we do not get it either! But times are better and the manufacturer more recognizing of the absolute need of good stories well constructed, and so he is really heart and soul and pocketbook with the real writer for the reels! The magazines, while willing to play fair, naturally hate to pay more than they have to.

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But what will they do if they cannot get any stories from the manufacturers unless they pay the author for the right to fictionize them? If it comes to a showdown, will the manufacturer rather favor his writers, upon whom he depends for the stories he must have in order to make pictures, or the magazines of this character, to whom he owes nothing but a little publicity?

In a great many cases the photoplay author is also a writer and seller of magazine fiction, and he certainly will not allow his magazine sales to be killed by fictionizing in other publications, especially (as is often the case) if it is badly done.

Mr. Smith's opinions are also the opinions of many of the photoplaywrights. It is a well-known fact that the manufacturer who buys and produces the short story published in a magazine, cannot allow the picture publications to fictionize this motion picture. The magazines insist that they be paid for the use of these stories. It is only fair then that the author also be paid for the fictionizing of his photoplay.

In the evolution of the photoplay this right will undoubtedly come to the photoplaywright. Only a few years ago he was not even mentioned on the screen. His part in the scenario was so remote that the public never heard of him. Now he is given credit on the screen and frequently on the advertising posters hung in front of the theaters.

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It is the day of the scenario writer. He is now recognized as having as much power and ability as the short-story or novel writer, or even playwright.

CHAPTER XXXIII

THE MARKET

THE market is changing so constantly that it is impossible to make a correct list of the needs of the various film companies. A company may have a dearth of film material today, and by next week buy such a supply of photoplays that it will not care to purchase any more scenarios for at least six months.

On the other hand this same film company may be adequately supplied with photoplays and not be in the market today, but next month may put out a call for additional scripts.

So in view of the movable quality of the film market, it is inadvisable to publish an exact list of the film companies who are buying scenarios.

Study the names of the companies who are a possible market for your wares. Keep in touch with them and in that way find out for yourself who is and who is not a possible buyer for your photoplays.

The following is a list of the film companies who have in the past, and will undoubtedly in the future, be your market. Learn their needs, keep in touch with them, and strive to please them.

The Market

AMERICAN FILM COMPANY, Santa Barbara, California.

BALBOA AMUSEMENT PRODUCING COMPANY, Long Branch, California.

BIOGRAPH COMPANY, 807 E. 175th St., New York City.

EDISON COMPANY, 2826 Decatur Ave., Bronx, New York.

ESSANAY FILM COMPANY, 1333 Argyle St., Chicago, Illinois.

FAMOUS PLAYERS FILM COMPANY, 213 W. 26th St., New York City.

THE KALEM COMPANY, 235 W. 23d St., New York City.

KAY BEE, 1712 Allesandro St., Los Angeles, California.

KEYSTONE, 1712 Allesandro St., Los Angeles, California.

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